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THE
C R I T E R I O N ;

OR,

R U L E S

BY WHICH

THE TRUE MIRACLES
RECORDED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

ARE DISTINGUISHED FROM

THE SPURIOUS MIRACLES
OF
PAGANS AND PAPISTS.

BY

JOHN DOUGLAS, D. D.
LORD BISHOP OF SALISBURY.

FOURTH EDITION.

OXFORD,
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.
MDCCCXXXII.



P R E F A C E.

THE first edition of the Criterion was printed in 1754, the second in 1807. It was published for the third time in a quarto volume, which contained some other works of Bishop Douglas, and which was printed at Salisbury in 1820. The preface to this last mentioned volume contains the following passage:

“ With respect to the present edition of the
“ Criterion, it has been carefully collated with
“ a copy corrected by the hand of the author :
“ and no alteration or addition has been made,
“ except such as he himself would have adopt-
“ ed, had not the copy been mislaid, which he
“ had long prepared for a new edition.”

A collation of this third edition with the preceding has proved the number of these alterations to be very considerable: and the present edition, which may be called the fourth, is a faithful copy of that which was

printed at Salisbury, except as to the quotations from other authors. These passages appear in many instances to have been very inaccurately transcribed. The Greek and Latin quotations particularly contain many errors: and a careful comparison of all these with the works from which they were taken, has made the present edition much more correct than any which preceded it.

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THE CRITERION,

&c.

SIR,

MY surprise has not been greater than my concern, to observe that a person of your good sense, candour, and learning, should have reasoned himself, as you say you have done, into an unfavourable opinion of the evidences of Christianity. Ever since our last conversation, the objections you stated have engaged much of my attention; and the result of my reflections you shall have in the present sheets. Nor do I think that this address requires any apology. The importance of the subject, and my repeated promises that I would give you my thoughts concerning it, sufficiently plead my excuse. And happy should I esteem myself, if any thing I suggest, prove the means of bringing you back to that religion, which you seem to have forsaken, and of satisfying you that the reasons you assign for rejecting the miracles recorded in the New Testament, ought not to weigh with one of your discernment.

Unskilled in controversy, it may seem presumption in me to offer my opinion on a subject, already so fully and frequently canvassed by the most eminent writers; and it may be thought that if their arguments have proved ineffectual to satisfy your doubts, it will be a vain attempt in me to aim at your conviction. But when I consider the nature of many of your objections, which are peculiar to

yourself, and not borrowed from books ; when I reflect, farther, that the controversy, with regard to the credibility of the gospel miracles, has, of late, taken a turn somewhat new, it is obvious, that to refer you to the many excellent defences of Christianity, already in the hands of the public, would be entirely unsatisfactory ; for these treatises having been adapted to the prevailing objections of unbelievers at the particular periods when they were written, it becomes necessary that the friends of our religion should change their method of defence, since the attack is not carried on in the old way.

You may remember what points you have chiefly insisted upon in our debates on this subject. You granted (as every thinking person must grant) that a power of working miracles, vested in one assuming the character of a Teacher from God, would sufficiently establish the truth of his claim ; “ but you “ urged, withal, that there was no solid foundation “ to believe that any such person was ever vested “ with such a power ; for that the miracles of Jesus “ and his apostles, related in the New Testament, “ were not supported by stronger evidence than “ were the prodigies that disgrace the pages of “ Livy, and the legendary tales that swell the lives “ of the Romish saints. Now these latter accounts “ being, on all hands, justly rejected as false, while “ the former, it seems, are admitted as true ; how “ then, you say, can we fairly dispute the authen-“ ticity of the one, and insist so much on the cre-“ dibility of the other ? For, as the testimony in “ both is equally strong, the miracles recorded in “ both the accounts must be equally credible. That, “ therefore, you had no way of extricating yourself

“ out of this labyrinth, but by rejecting, at once, all
“ miraculous pretensions whatever.”

The whole dispute subsisting between us may be stated thus: The protestant Christian thinks himself obliged, from all the principles of reason, to believe that evidence true which is brought to support the gospel miracles; but is at liberty, he thinks, from the same principles of reason, to doubt or disbelieve the miracles ascribed to the pagans of old, or to the papists of later times, or, indeed, to any other person since the publication of the gospel. But, herein, you are pleased to charge us with a strange and inconsistent belief, because, you say, the evidence for the truth of the miracles in each case is either the very same, or equally strong.

I have not the least hesitation when I pronounce this charge to be groundless. And I trust that I shall be able to convince every candid reader of this treatise, addressed to you, that base metal is not more easily detected, when an attempt is made to pass it for gold, than are the false pretensions of paganism and popery, when an attempt is made to put them on the same footing of credibility with the miracles of Jesus and his apostles.

I most readily admit, that the credibility of such extraordinary performances as are miracles will not be sufficiently ascertained, unless the accounts of them be authenticated by such a weight of unexceptionable testimony, as must satisfy every candid and capable inquirer after truth.

You cannot, surely, refuse to join issue with me here. For, with all your unfavourable notions about miracles, I see not how you can require a greater concession than this. And yet, however great it be,

I am confident I shall not endanger the cause for which I am an advocate, by setting out with it. For if we can prove (and my design in the following pages is to prove) that the evidence brought for the gospel miracles is full as extraordinary as the facts themselves, and that no just suspicion of fraud and falsehood appears in the accounts, while every thing is the reverse with regard to the evidence brought for the pagan and popish miracles ; if we can prove this, I say, our reason will tell us that we safely may, and that we ought indeed to make a distinction, and to believe the former while we reject the latter.

But before we proceed, give me leave to observe, that it is in vain to begin this important dispute, unless you are agreed to decide it by the only kind of evidence that can possibly be had, namely, by the credit that is due to those who appear as witnesses, or, in other words, by examining the facts, with all the circumstances of them, and considering, at large, the characters, the views, and the conduct of those who reported them.

Writers, on the side of infidelity, have very rarely ventured to assert the absolute incredibility of miracles ; and their precaution seems very prudent. For a miracle being an event brought about in a way contrary to the course of nature, and the course of nature being the establishment of God, every believer of his existence, it should seem, must admit, that it is in his power to reverse it. But this, we know, has been denied by a late very ingenious, but very sceptical author^a, who has not scrupled to give

^a Philosophical Essays concerning Human Understanding, by David Hume, Esq.

us his reasons, why he makes the impossibility and miraculous nature of events^b, synonymous, and why he gives his decision, that a miracle supported by any human testimony is more properly a subject of derision than of argument^c. It may not, therefore, be improper, to take some notice of this author's favourite argument against miracles, which he himself is so fond of, as to boast that it will, with the wise and learned, be an everlasting check to superstitious delusions^d; for to him it seems that all miracles are superstitious delusions.

“A miracle,” says he, “is a violation of the laws of nature, and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined^e.” Now it is obvious, from this quotation, that our author's argument against the credibility of miracles depends entirely upon this, of their being events contrary to firm and unalterable experience. But why an event should be incredible, and incapable of being proved by testimony, because it is contrary to our experience, this point, on the certainty of which alone our author's boasted argument is built, I did not, upon perusing the *Essay on Miracles*, find any attempt made to prove; but upon examining the other essays in the collection, it appeared that this point had been the subject of two foregoing ones^f; and that having established its

^b P. 195. Where the author, speaking of Abbé Paris's miracles, says, what have we now to oppose to such a cloud of witnesses, but the absolute impossibility or miraculous nature of the events they relate?

^c P. 194, 195. ^d 174. ^e 180. ^f The 4th and 5th.

truth there, as he supposed, he thought himself warranted, in his subsequent Essay on Miracles, to lay it as the foundation of his reasoning.

What, then, is this grand principle of our author's new philosophy^g? He begins with observing, that "all reasonings concerning matter of fact seem to be founded in the relation of *cause* and *effect*, and that by means of that relation alone, can we go beyond the evidence of our memory and senses. If you were to ask a man," says he, "why he believes any matter of fact which is absent; for instance, that his friend is in the country, or in France; he would give you a reason, and this reason would be some other fact; as a letter received from him, or the knowledge of his former resolutions and promises. A man, finding a watch or any other machine, in a desert island, would conclude that there had once been men in that island. All our reasonings concerning fact are of the same nature; and here it is constantly supposed that there is a connexion between the present fact and that inferred from it." Thus far his doctrine is unexceptionable; but when he proceeds to inquire how we arrive at the knowledge of causes and effects, here we must leave him, unless we would, with him, contradict first principles, and strike at the foundation of all certainty. For he lays it down "as a general proposition, which admits of no exception, that the knowledge of this relation of cause and effect is not, in any instance, attained by reasonings, *a priori*, but arises entirely from experience, when we find that any particular objects are constantly connected with each other. Let an object be present-

^g P. 49.

“ ed to a man of ever so strong natural reason and
“ abilities ; if that object be entirely new to him, he
“ will not be able, by the most accurate examination
“ of its sensible qualities, to discover any of its causes
“ or effects. Adam, though his rational faculties be
“ supposed, at the very first, entirely perfect, could not
“ have inferred, from the fluidity and transparency
“ of water, that it would suffocate him, or from the
“ light and warmth of fire, that it would consume
“ him. No object ever discovers, by the qualities
“ which appear to the senses, either the causes which
“ produced it, or the effects which will arise from it;
“ nor can our reason, unassisted by experience, ever
“ draw any inferences concerning real existence and
“ matter of fact^h. ”

It is on the truth of these assertions that the argument depends, by which our author would prove that miracles are incapable of being made credible by human testimony. For thus they seem to be connected together. Previous to our own experience, we can discover no connexion between cause and effect, nor assure ourselves, by reasoning, *a priori*, that a cause has an aptness to produce one effect rather than another. From this position then it follows, that unless our own experience has connected a cause with a particular effect, no testimony of witnesses can induce us to believe that this effect was produced ; but miracles being events contrary to firm and unalterable experience, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. I have endeavoured, with all the impartiality I am master of, to give you a fair representation of

^h P. 50, 51.

this argument ; and I hope I have not mistaken it, though a mistake here might be very pardonable, considering the obscurity of this writer, owing more to the singularity of his matter than to any defect in his style. I shall now endeavour to satisfy you, that one who can insist on such points has no pretensions to be followed as a guide.

For it should seem, that the very proposing his opinion will, to every one who has not renounced the first principles of human knowledge, be a sufficient confutation of it ; and though we could not point out any inconsistencies or contradictions in the reasoning by which it is supported, yet as it is apparently sceptical, nay, as the author himself tells us it is soⁱ, his arguments, for this one reason, merit no answer, because they can scarcely meet with advocates ; they may puzzle, but they cannot convince ; they may confound, but never will convert the reader. And it is no inconsiderable proof of the weakness of a cause, when it cannot be defended but by running counter to the general sense of mankind, and contradicting truths looked upon as self-evident.

If no event, however well attested, be credible, which contradicts experience, then there can be no certain standard of the credibility of facts ; but this will vary as does the experience of those to whom they are proposed ; for all men have not the same opportunities of seeing the same events ; and a thing may be familiar to one, and never heard of by another. That there are many events true, which men can have no experience of, is certain. But were the doctrine which we are now opposing to be admitted,

ⁱ The fourth Essay he calls Sceptical Doubts, and the fifth, Sceptical Solutions of these Doubts.

no such thing could ever be made credible to one who has not seen it ; but what strange work would this make in life ? and how ridiculous would a man make himself if he rejected matters of fact, indisputably true, and confirmed to him by the most unexceptionable testimony, merely because they were contrary to his experience. For instance, what could be more contrary to experience, to firm unalterable experience, within these three or four centuries, than that a small iron bullet, of a few pounds weight, should be able to batter down the thickest and strongest walls ? At the first invention of fire-arms, suppose that this fact had been attested to a person at a distance, who was entirely unacquainted with the principles and mechanism of the new machine ; suppose it attested in the strongest and most unexceptionable manner, by thousands of witnesses, persons of credit and reputation, persons who were spectators, and who could not be suspected of any design to impose a lie, would it be enough for the person to whom this matter of fact was proposed, to say, I will not believe it, because you tell me a thing contrary to uniform and constant experience ? would he not be looked upon as a whimsical sceptic, if he refused to believe it on this evidence ? Certainly he would, with every body except the author of Philosophical Essays, according to whose principles this evidence must be resisted. So that this doctrine, that no event, however well attested, is to be believed, unless it be warranted by experience, excludes from being credible, events deducible from the laws of nature, and which are to be accounted for on mechanical principles, as well as it does miracles. It therefore proves too much, and consequently proves nothing at

all. This will be farther illustrated by putting the following case: It is contrary to the uniform, constant experience of the inhabitants under the torrid zone, that water should become solid as the dry land. Suppose, then, what we know must have happened, that persons from our part of the world should go into those sultry regions, and affirm there, to the natives, that water frequently became thus hard in the countries they came from; suppose that vast numbers of witnesses agree in the same attestation, and that this matter of fact is affirmed by every one who arrives from our climates; must all this weight of testimony go for nothing, merely because they assert what is contrary to firm and unalterable experience? This would be very absurd, yet, upon our author's principles it must. Nor will it make any difference to say, that such events alone are incapable of being rendered credible by testimony, which are contrary to uniform experience in all different parts of the world. For if a person be ignorant of what is usual in other climates, then a thing contrary to the settled course of nature in the country where he lives, is as much a miracle (to him I mean) as a thing contrary to the settled course of nature in all parts of the world. That a dead man should be again brought to life, is an event contrary to the settled course of nature in all parts of the world: and supposing such an event attested in the most unexceptionable manner to the inhabitants of any country whatever, they could have no greater reason to look upon it as incredible, than the inhabitants of the torrid zone have to look upon the freezing of water as incredible.

Again, if no event, however well attested, is to be believed, unless we have experience for it, then would

it follow, that we could never infer the possibility of any events by arguments drawn from reason, or from the nature of the thing. Our author was aware of this, and, therefore, to obviate such an objection, he endeavours to prove that the distinction usually made betwixt arguments drawn from experience and those drawn from reason is, at the bottom, erroneous; and asserts, “that all those arguments, “ which are supposed to be the mere effects of reasoning and reflection, will be found to terminate, “ at last, in some general principle and conclusion, “ for which we can assign no reason, but observation “ and experience^k.” But is it possible for any serious man to reason thus in earnest? For if reason antecedent to experience can in no instance point out a connexion betwixt cause and effect, then must we say that there is no foundation in reason for believing that a fabric, consisting of a variety of parts, nicely and regularly put together, is the effect of a designing cause, rather than that it sprang from blind chance. We universally assent to the truth of this proposition, that whatever had a beginning arose from a cause prior to it, and producing it. But will our author assert that we could never have known the certainty of this, unless we had drawn it from experience? Will he assert that experience is our sole ground for concluding that life, consciousness, and reason, could not be communicated but by a cause vested with such perfections? Strange as these doctrines are, they are the obvious consequences of the position that experience alone points out the connexion between cause and effect. Nor indeed are these consequences such as our author

^k P. 74.

will disown; for he expressly tells us, that if we reason *a priori*, any thing may appear able to produce any thing; the falling of a pebble may, for aught we know, extinguish the sun, or the wish of a man controul the planets in their orbits: and again, that not only the will of the Supreme Being may create matter, but, for aught we can know, *a priori*, the will of any other being might create it, or any other cause that the most whimsical imagination can assign¹. I need say no more to you, I am sure, nor indeed to any person of sound judgment, to make you disclaim this author as a guide, whose argument against miracles, if it has any weight, is equally an argument against the existence of an intelligent first Cause.

The sophistry of our author's argument, by which he would prove, that without experience we never can discover the connexion between cause and effect, lies here, that he brings his instances from the laws of matter and motion established in the world; which laws being, confessedly, arbitrary constitutions of the Creator, the manner of their operations cannot, to be sure, be deduced from any previous reasoning, but must be drawn solely from experience; and from these particular instances he infers his universal conclusion, which is evidently false. For does it at all follow, that, because there is no connexion discoverable *a priori* betwixt cause and effect, in some cases, there is no connexion discoverable *a priori* in any case? Because God (and I pretend to reason with none but believers of a God) has established such and such laws in the universe; for instance, that fire should consume, and water

¹ P. 254.

suffocate, and a heavy body descend; will it follow that, in this case, we cannot discover from reason, independent of all experience, that God could have established laws different from these at first, and can, when he thinks fit, suspend them now that they are established. This was what our author ought to have proved, and for this plain reason: Every one who has admitted the existence of a God, will be apt to urge that we can discover, by reasoning, *a priori*, that there is a connexion between an Almighty cause, and every effect that is the object of power, and, consequently, that we can discover, by reasoning, *a priori*, the possibility of miracles, because it requires the exertion of no greater power to reverse the established laws of nature (in the doing of which consists a miracle) than, at the beginning, to establish them. Our author foresaw some such objection as this might be urged; for he tells us that, “ though “ the Being to whom the miracle is ascribed be Al-“ mighty, it does not, upon that account, become a “ whit more probable; since it is impossible for us “ to know the attributes or actions of such a Being, “ otherwise than from the experience which we have “ of his productions in the usual course of nature.” Here he presents us again with some of his paradoxes. Who would not have thought that an Almighty Being could produce every possibility, and consequently depart from his productions in the usual course of nature? A person of a plain ordinary understanding would have thought, that the very idea of omnipotence implied the power of doing this: and will expect to hear it demonstrated, that nothing is possible but what is established in the usual course of nature, before he alters his opinion.

Unless, therefore, our author can demonstrate this, which, however enterprising, he has not pretended to do ; unless he can shew that an event, contrary to the usual course of things, is not an object of power ; the idea of the omnipotence of God will lead us to admit the possibility of such events, and if once their possibility be admitted, in spite of all the quibbles of the sophist, and all the art of the sceptic, common sense will teach us, that such events, which are what we call miracles, may be made credible by testimony ; because they are supposed to be matters of fact, of the certainty of which spectators may have all the assurance they can have for the certainty of the most common events.

But why need I take so much pains to prove that miracles may become credible by testimony, when I can bring in our author as concurring in the same conclusion ? It is frequently the fate of writers, especially of such as aim at something new and singular, to confute themselves in their own works ; and that the author of the Essay on Miracles has done this, will appear from the following quotation :
“ I beg the limitations here made may be remarked,
“ when I say that a miracle can never be proved so
“ as to be the foundation of a system of religion.
“ For I own that otherwise there may possibly be
“ miracles, or violations of the usual course of na-
“ ture, of such a kind as to admit of proof from hu-
“ man testimony, though, perhaps, it will be impos-
“ sible to find any such in all the records of history.
“ Thus, suppose all authors, in all languages, agree,
“ that from the first of January, 1600, there was a
“ total darkness over the whole earth for eight days ;
“ suppose that the tradition of this extraordinary

“ event is still strong and lively among the people :
“ that all travellers, who return from foreign coun-
“ tries, bring us accounts of the same tradition, with-
“ out the least variation or contradiction ; it is evi-
“ dent that our present philosophers, instead of
“ doubting of that fact, ought to receive it for cer-
“ tain, and ought to search for the causes whence it
“ might be derived ^m.”

Not to insist on the obvious inconsistency of recommending it to the philosophers, to search for the causes of an event contrary to uniform and constant experience, when, according to our author's doctrine, such a search would be absurd and useless, because experience alone points out the connexion between cause and effect ; not to insist on this, I shall beg leave to observe, that in the above quotation he himself pulls down his own favourite scheme. For I appeal to every reader, whether we have not here a confession, that human testimony may, in some cases, give credibility to miracles, or violations of the laws of nature ? He forgets then that he had laid it down as a principle, “ that no testimony for any kind of miracle can ever possibly amount to a probability, much less a proofⁿ ; that it is experience only which gives authority to human testimony ^o, that a miracle, supported by any human testimony, is more properly a subject of derision than of argument^p.” For here he allows that testimony, under certain circumstances, may give credibility to a stranger prodigy than ever happened. Perhaps he will say, that the universality of the miracle and

^m P. 199. ⁿ Ibid. The evidence “ that no testimony for any kind of miracle *has ever amounted*,” &c.

^o P. 198. ^p P. 194.

of the testimony, in the instance assigned by him, makes it different from all others. I answer, that admitting it does, still he stands charged with a contradiction of his own principles, which, how he can get clear of, I see not. His general opinion, as is evident from his own words just quoted, is, that human testimony, in no instance, can prove a miracle ; how, therefore, can this position be maintained, and it be granted, at the same time, as he does grant, that such a testimony as he describes will give credibility to the miracle of the eight days' darkness ? In the one place he rejects human testimony absolutely, and without any restrictions, when reporting a miracle ; and, in the other place, he gives us leave, provided human testimony have certain qualifications mentioned by him, to admit it, however miraculous the fact attested may be.

But I see no reason why a local violation of the course of nature ; a darkness, for instance, of eight days in one country only, if attested by those who lived near the place where it happened, and confirmed by the tradition of those who had opportunities of knowing the fact, should not be looked upon as equally credible with the universal darkness instanced by our author. The possibility of a local miracle cannot, surely, be denied by the person who admits the possibility of so strange a miracle as one extending over the whole earth. Now, if a local miracle be possible, nothing more can be requisite to establish its credibility, but that we have all the evidence for it that the nature of the fact can admit of ; and as it was not universal, universal testimony must not be expected. For the nature of the proof from testimony is the same, whether we have five

hundred or five millions of witnesses. If the less number have equal opportunities of knowing what they attest, and be equally credible in other respects with the greater number, we have equal reason for admitting the testimony of both.

You see, sir, that the greatest champion against miracles does himself admit, that human testimony may prove a miracle of as extraordinary a kind too as we can suppose ever to happen.

But, upon a closer attention, I begin to think I have injured him, by supposing that he could ever deny that miracles, in general, can be made credible by testimony ; for, it seems, his opinion is, that only such miracles cannot be made credible by testimony, as are urged to be the foundation of a new system of religion ; and he desires us to understand him with this limitation^q. Not to misrepresent him, therefore, this limitation shall be allowed him. But, at the same time, I would ask him this plain question, if this be allowed him, will it not involve him in a labyrinth of contradictions ? For it matters not, whether a miracle be wrought in support of a religion or no ; our author's boasted argument strikes at all miracles ; and, according to his principles, all miracles must be rejected, because all miracles are events contrary to firm and unalterable experience. Before, therefore, he had admitted that human testimony may give credibility to such miracles as are not ascribed to a new system of religion, he should have taken care to have weighed the obvious consequences of his own arguments, which expressly forbid him to believe any miracles at all. But, not to carry this charge of inconsistency any farther, we

^q Page 199.

have here a clear view of the principles of this gentleman. He will believe any thing when religion is out of the question, let it be ever so strange; but whenever religion is concerned, he is so scrupulous, that he will admit nothing. He grants that the most extraordinary prodigies may be proved by testimony, provided nobody can assign any end or purpose they could be designed to answer; but whenever miracles are appealed to as the foundation of a new system of religion, that is, whenever a wise and important end can be served by them, then he would have us believe that we have been imposed upon, and that no such miracles were really performed. How wild and inconsistent this way of talking (for I cannot call it reasoning) is, I appeal even to yourself; which, while it absolutely refuses credibility to the miracles of the Christian scriptures, allows us to believe such miracles and prodigies as are to be met with in Livy or Dion Cassius.

But what is the reason assigned for the incredibility of miracles, when they are made the foundation of a new religion? Because, says our author, “men, “in all ages, have been so much imposed on by ridiculous stories of that kind, that this very circumstance would be a full proof of a cheat, and sufficient, with all men of sense, not only to make them reject the fact, but even reject it without farther examination.”

Are we then brought back, after all the efforts of metaphysical scepticism, to this weak and childish argument, that, because some men have been knaves and fools, therefore all must be such? That because some men’s testimony in relating miracles has been

^r Page 200.

false, no testimony whatever for a miraculous fact ought ever to be taken? To infer from the world's having been sometimes imposed upon by false miracles, that no miracles have ever been true, is as absurd as if one should deny that there is any real virtue among men, because there is much hypocrisy; or as if he should refuse to take any coin, because it sometimes has been counterfeited. Counterfeit coin supposes that there is such a thing in the world as good money, and nobody would pretend, outwardly, to be virtuous, unless some were really so. In the same manner, the false miracles, about which so much work is made, suppose the existence of real ones; and the cheats that have been imposed upon the world, far from furnishing us with reasons to reject all miracles in general, are, on the contrary, a strong proof that some, of which they are imitations, have been genuine. By what criterion we can distinguish the true from the false is indeed a most important inquiry, and will be the subject of the following sheets.

I shall not prosecute my examination of this author's boasted argument against miracles any farther, both because it has been fully and effectually answered by others^s, and because what I have just thrown out must satisfy you that events contrary to firm and constant experience may become credible by human testimony, especially as you have his word for it; and he was the first, I know of, who ever denied it, giving us his reason for doing so. In this, acting

^s By Dr. Rutherford in a sermon; by an anonymous author of Remarks on an Essay concerning Miracles; supposed to be bishop Ellis; but more at large by the Rev. Mr. Adams, of Shrewsbury, and by Dr. Campbell, of Aberdeen.

the part of a fair adversary, and at the same time, in my opinion, giving the severest blow to the enemies of the gospel miracles that they ever received ; because he has shewn that he could not (and if he could not, I am sure no other person can) establish the incredibility of miracles, but by calling in question the first principles of human knowledge : but by introducing the most extravagant scepticism that ever made its appearance under the venerable name of philosophy. I shall only add, that an author who espouses such opinions can never be a dangerous enemy to religion. His arguments having novelty may please for a while ; but so opposite are they to every one's settled notions, that their influence cannot be lasting. Sorry I am to say, that the author of the Philosophical Essays seems to have a right to this character, a character which must sink the value of his writings, in spite of the most eminent abilities.

Though I have sufficiently exposed the weakness of Mr. Hume's sceptical subtleties, the advocates of infidelity, in general, not having adopted them, it is incumbent on me to take notice of a more popular objection, to which they usually have recourse. It is this, that man has a light within, which answers, to the full, all the purposes of religion, and that a due attention to his rational faculties will, without the assistance of supernatural instruction, enable him to know and to act in conformity to the Divine will, as the means of securing the favour of Heaven, and the happiness of a future life.

We may pronounce this to be an assertion equally presumptuous and unfounded ; for, however instructed man might be, as originally created, it could not

but be the care of an all-wise and benevolent Being to rekindle the light of natural reason, when its corrupted and debased state had involved the human race in all the mischiefs of the most humiliating darkness ; a darkness which we know was universal, and would have been insuperable, if it had not been dispelled by the light of revelation. And those minute philosophers of our days, who disclaim all revelation as unnecessary, would do well to consider, that Socrates, the most distinguished philosopher of heathen antiquity, entertained no such notions of the sufficiency of human reason. For he expressly tells us, that we must wait till we learn from an instructor who careth for us, and has a wonderful concern for our interests, in what manner we are to conduct ourselves with regard to God and our fellow-creatures^t. This verdict alone I esteem as a complete answer to all the sophistries of a Collins, and all the declamation of a Tindal.

It is upon this footing that the miracles recorded in the New Testament are to be defended. For the expediency of a divine revelation being once admitted, the expediency of miracles may easily be proved. There are but two ways by which God could reveal his will to mankind : either by an immediate influence on the mind of every individual of every age,

^t This remarkable judgment of Socrates, concerning the expediency of a revelation, is to be met with in Plato's Second Alcibiades. Ἀναγκαῖον οὖν ἐστι περιμένειν ἕως ὃν τις μάθη ὡς δεῖ πρὸς Θεοὺς καὶ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους διακεῖσθαι. Α. Πότε οὖν παρέσται ὁ χρόνος οὗτος, ὁ Σώκρατες; καὶ τίς ὁ παιδεύσων; ἥδιστα γὰρ ὃν μοι δοκῶ ἵδεῖν τοῦτον τὸν ἀνθρωπὸν τίς ἐστιν. Σωκρ. Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ μέλει περὶ σοῦ.—ἀλλὰ μὴν κἀκεῖνος θαυμαστὴν ὅσην περί σου προθυμίαν ἔχει. Platonis Dialog. Select. Ed. Cantab. p. 256, 257.

or by selecting some particular persons to be his instruments, in reforming and enlightening the world, and for this purpose vested by him with such powers, as might carry the strongest evidence that they were really divine teachers.

But with regard to the first method which I have mentioned, if you should urge that this would have been the properest, as it would have superseded the use and necessity of miracles, I would desire you to consider, that you admit what is more extraordinary and incredible than the miracles you reject. For, upon this supposition, you must believe it to be more probable, that God should be continually superseding and acting contrary to his own appointment, by making a new revelation of his will to every individual, than that he should only do it upon a special and extraordinary occasion.

The other method, therefore, of publishing a revelation from heaven was to be made choice of; some particular persons were to be appointed to teach and authenticate it to the world. But how were such persons, whom we suppose teachers from heaven, to prevail with others to receive what they taught as the will of God? Will their bare assertion be sufficient? At this rate, a wide door would be opened to imposture, and every one might, at pleasure, publish the whims of a disordered imagination, or the errors of a depraved heart, as messages from heaven. It must, therefore, be in the power of the Divine teacher to appeal to some credential that may prove he has a right to be believed.

Perhaps you will say, that the intrinsic excellence and reasonableness of what is taught will be effectual for this purpose. Admitting, however, a Divine

revelation, will it not be probable that some doctrines may be of such a nature as not to be tried by this test? May there not be mysteries, that is, doctrines, which cannot be perfectly understood by men? Nay, is it not likely that a revealed system of religion will contain such doctrines; as it will discover such truths concerning the Divine nature, and the government of the universe, as to the weak understanding of man can have no previous appearance of fitness; and which can be admitted to be true only because we know they are revealed. On admitting that the matter of a revelation might approve itself to right reason, corrupted reason, reason sunk in idolatry and superstition on the one hand, and in immoral practice on the other, would pay but little regard to the instructions of those who could produce no authority, but the intrinsic one of their instructions being agreeable to reason. And hence it was, that even if any of the pagan philosophers had taught a perfect rule of religion and morality, which, however, was far from being the case, none of them could ever have done much good as to instructing and reforming mankind. They wanted authority to teach, and sanctions to enforce, as a law, what they taught. And as neither the bare assertion of the teacher, nor the reasonableness of what he teaches, can be sufficient to prevail with others, to receive him as sent from God, what else can be done, in order to prove this, but to vest him with such powers as might carry the clearest evidence of a divine assistance? And what clearer evidence can be produced of this assistance, than his being vested with a power of performing such works, as no man could perform unless God were with him?

I trust, that I have not unsuccessfully defended the Christian revelation from such of the attacks of the advocates of infidelity as have been already considered by me. But sufficient notice has not as yet been taken of an objection, which, as it seems to be their most favourite topic, it is incumbent on me, if I would do full justice to the subject, to examine with due attention. The objection is this. That men in all ages having been so much imposed upon by false pretensions to supernatural powers, a just suspicion is created, that no such powers have ever been actually exerted; especially as it is confidently asserted, that the miracles recorded in the New Testament, and which we believe to be the works of God, are not supported by stronger evidence than are those of paganism and popery which we reject. How little foundation there is for this objection, will, I flatter myself, be most completely proved, in the extensive view of the subject which shall be laid before you. The accounts which have been published to the world of miracles in general, may, I think, be arranged under these two classes: first, of events confessedly beyond the power of natural causes to produce; and, secondly, of events which, though not in their own nature miraculous, have, in particular instances, been believed to be such, from a consideration of the peculiar circumstances under which they were brought about.

Entering now upon the task I have undertaken, I shall begin with an accurate examination of the miracles reported to have been wrought amongst pagans of old and Christians of latter times, and hope to produce substantial reasons for our rejection of both classes of them, by shewing, first, that such of

them as are confessedly of the supernatural kind, may, from the insufficiency of the evidence produced in support of them, be justly suspected to have never happened ; and, secondly, that such of them as we may admit to have happened, though ascribed to the exertion of supernatural power, were brought about by the operation of causes merely natural.

After having carefully illustrated and confirmed this statement, I shall proceed to an examination of the Gospel miracles, from which it will appear, in opposition to the assertion of Mr. Hume and his infidel friends, that they may most easily be distinguished from the other events of the marvellous kind, which are either the fabrications of imposture or the dreams of credulity ; and that both classes of them, recorded in the New Testament, are supported by evidence so entirely unexceptionable, as must convince every lover of truth, that they were really performed, and that all of them are undoubtedly miraculous.

Such, then, is the plan upon which I am to proceed, and on which I build my expectation of convincing you of the truth of the Christian faith. If the premises proposed may be made good, as I am persuaded they may, at least in the hands of some abler disputant, the conclusion is, that the Christian religion must needs be true, upon your own concession. For your concession was, that a person assuming the character of a teacher sent from God, and vested with a miraculous power, has a right to be obeyed in whatsoever he teaches. Now, that Christ assumed the character of a teacher from God, you will readily grant ; and it is incumbent upon me to endeavour to prove, agreeably to my plan, that he was vested with the power of performing real miracles.

In order to this, and in pursuance of the plan that I have laid down, let us now take into consideration such of the wonderful works said to have been performed amongst pagans and papists, as could not possibly be brought about by the operation of any natural cause; and, I flatter myself, that the evidence produced in their support will appear to be so very defective and insufficient, as justly to warrant our rejecting them as idle tales that never happened, and the inventions of bold and interested deceivers.

I have already observed, when I treated of the evidence requisite to give credibility to miracles, that the testimony supporting them must be free from every suspicion of fraud and imposture. And the reason is this. The history of miracles (to make use of the words of an author^u whose authority you will think of some weight) is of a kind totally different from that of common events: the one to be suspected always of course, without the strongest evidence to confirm it; the other to be admitted of course, without as strong reason to suspect it. So that, wherever the evidence urged for miracles leaves grounds for a suspicion of fraud and imposition, the very suspicion furnishes sufficient reasons for disbelieving them. And what I shall offer, under this head, will make it evident that those miracles which the protestant Christian thinks himself at liberty to reject, have always been so insufficiently attested as to leave full scope for fraud and imposition.

That I may proceed with the greater perspicuity, I shall here lay down a few general rules, by which we may try those pretended miracles, one and all, wherever they occur, and which may set forth the

^u Middleton's Free Inquiry, p. 217.

grounds on which we suspect them to be false. It would be an endless and an unnecessary task to enumerate all the manifold miracles reported amongst pagans and amongst papists, and to examine them one by one critically, in order to disprove them. I shall only, by way of illustration of my rules, select a few memorable ones, by which may be formed a judgment of the rest.

Now, I think it will be impossible for you to assign any particular instance of a pagan or popish miracle which does not labour under one or other of the following defects, which we think warrant our disbelieving them.

First, we suspect miracles to be false, when the accounts of them are not published to the world till long after the time when they are said to have been performed.

Secondly, we suspect them to be false, when the accounts are not published in the place where it is pretended they were performed, but are propagated only at a great distance from the supposed scene of action.

Thirdly, supposing the accounts to have the two foregoing qualifications, we still may suspect them to be false, if in the time when, and at the place where they took their rise, the circumstances were such that they might be suffered to pass without examination. For if the circumstances under which miracles were appealed to, be such as that we can give a probable account of their passing current without examination, we shall be warranted to conclude, that this really was the case.

Now in illustrating the last and the most important rule laid down, it immediately occurs to us that

miracles may be supposed to have been admitted without examination: first, if they coincided with the favourite opinions and superstitious prejudices of those to whom they were reported, and who, on that account, might be eager to receive them without evidence; secondly, if they were set on foot, or at least were encouraged and supported by those who alone had the power of detecting the fraud, and who could prevent any examination which might tend to undeceive the world.

And when we come to try by this test any particular miracle of paganism or popery, which can be traced up to contemporary witnesses, and was published on the spot, it will be instantly observed that it labours under one or other, or both of the above mentioned defects. We shall ever find the people refusing any examination of the miracle, through a blind credulity and eagerness of belief, or the promoters of it, armed with power, rendering an examination impracticable.

But what occasion, you may say, can there be for my troubling myself to point out to you the reasons why those miracles ought to be rejected as false, of the truth of which you never professed yourself to be a believer? I answer, that though you have not professed a belief of them, you and your friends have represented them as bearing equally strong marks of genuineness with the miracles of the gospel; with this professed view, to have both of them thought spurious. It became necessary, therefore, in order to extricate ourselves out of this labyrinth, in which you would involve us, to point out such defects in the evidence of the miracles set up in opposition to those of the gospel, as warrant our disbelieving

them. When I have examined, then, the most memorable accounts of those spurious miracles, according to the rules above mentioned, I shall proceed to prove that the objections which destroy their credibility, cannot, with any justice, be urged against the evidence of the miracles of the gospel.

The first rule laid down was, that we may justly suspect those miracles to be false, the accounts of which are not published to the world till long after the time when they are said to have been performed.

In order to give credibility to any distant fact, it is expected either that uninterrupted tradition should have preserved and handed down the memory of it ; or, at least, if the tradition has been interrupted, that it should be mentioned in contemporary records. And if common matters of fact, which cannot be traced up to the age they pretend to, are not to be admitted as credible, this certainly holds much stronger with regard to miracles. Now, upon examination, it will be found that the accounts which we have of many of the boasted wonders of paganism and popery are of this kind, that is, cannot be traced up to the age they pretend to, but were published to the world, when length of time had, by removing the means of examination, rendered a detection of their falsehood impossible.

And, first of all, under this head may be ranged the account of the miracles of Apollonius of Tyana, published to the world in his Life, written by Philostratus.

It is certain that Philostratus did not write till above an hundred years after the death of his hero. What evidence, therefore, have we that the facts attributed to this wonder-worker by his historian were

ever heard of before he wrote? That the Life of Apollonius had been already written by Mæragenes is, indeed, certain ^x. But so far is this from proving that the miracles ascribed to him by Philostratus had been, before this, taken notice of by Mæragenes, that the direct contrary may be inferred from this, that Philostratus, instead of making use of such materials as were already in the hands of the public ^y, acquaints us that he composed his work, partly from common report, and partly from an account of Apollonius, delivered to him by the empress Julia, the wife of Severus, said, indeed, on the authority of the unknown person who gave it to the empress, to have been written by one Damis, a companion of Apollonius, but never heard of in the world, till it furnished materials to Philostratus ^z.

Is it possible, therefore, to give credit to any

^x Origen. contra Celsum, lib. vi. c. 41. p. 662.

^y The reason why Philostratus did not make use of Mæragenes, who had written Apollonius's Life before he did, may be guessed at from what Origen tells us: that Apollonius, according to the account given of him by Mæragenes, was looked upon as a magician and a juggler. 'Αλῶναι ὑπὸ τῆς ἐν Ἀπολλωνίῳ μαγείᾳς οὐκ ἀγεννεῖς τινας φιλοσόφους, ὡς πρὸς γόητα αὐτὸν εἰσελθόντας. Origen loc. cit. The authority, therefore, of Mæragenes could not be appealed to by Philostratus, without defeating the intention of his book. The former seems to have represented Apollonius, as he really was, a person who could, by his superior art and dexterity, perform surprising feats and legerdemain tricks which the superstition and ignorance of the times gave him encouragement to attribute to magic. A magician being, in those ages, looked upon (as appears from many places of Origen's book just quoted) to be one who, by the use of certain incantations, and charms, and forms of barbarous words, or by the celebration of certain odd rites, could force superior beings or dæmons to assist him.

^z Philostratus, lib. i. c. 3.

history, much less to a history of miracles, which stands on this most suspicious evidence? For the whole credit due to the miracles of Apollonius is ultimately to be resolved into the credit due to Philostratus himself; and, surely, little credit is due to him. We have no other evidence for the truth of these strange facts, but the affirmation of one who lived so long after they are supposed to have happened, that he could not possibly know, allowing him inclined to be impartial, whether the materials he had to work upon were true or false. And not only this, we have besides no other evidence for these wonders, except the affirmation of one whom we have sufficient grounds to suspect of having a design to obtrude a history of lies upon the world. This, indeed, is more than I need prove, to destroy the credibility of the miracles of Apollonius, which is overturned by this single consideration, that the account we have of them was not written by one who had opportunities of knowing the truth, nor published but to those who, through length of time, had no opportunities of detecting the forgery.

However, I shall add some farther reflections, from which it will appear, that internal marks of falsehood are as glaring, from Philostratus's own narration, as the defects of its external evidence have been shewn to be.

The supporters of paganism having observed, that the rapid and extensive propagation of Christianity was produced by an appeal to the miracles of its founder, thought that they could not more effectually serve their dying cause, than by setting up a similar claim, in defence of the established idolatry. Accordingly, Philostratus undertook to write the Life of

Apollonius. That it may not be said I assert without proof, and decide without argument, suffer me to mention a few particulars, which will demonstrate that Philostratus was not so careful to relate what Apollonius really performed, as to invent a series of miracles, which might be parallel to those ascribed by Christians to Jesus, and which correspond so exactly with facts recorded in the New Testament, that we need not hesitate in pronouncing them imitations of it.

Is Jesus styled in the Gospels the Son of God? Philostratus makes his hero the reputed son of Jupiter. Do the evangelists mention the appearance of an angel to the blessed Virgin, and the shining of a star at the birth of Jesus? Philostratus tells us, that the gods admonished in a dream the mother of Apollonius of the birth of this great infant, and that, when he was born, a flash of lightning fell from heaven^a. Did Jesus raise the daughter of Jairus from the dead? Our philosopher, in imitation of this, raises to life a young maid at Rome^b. Do the Gospels abound with cures of dæmoniacs? Apollonius also is introduced performing the same. Nay, farther, it is extremely remarkable, (and to the bishop of Avranche, M. Huet, we owe the observation,) that Philostratus, in relating how Apollonius broke off a correspondence which one had with a dæmon, uses almost the same words which are used by St. Luke, in relating the cure of a dæmoniac by our Saviour. The evangelist^c tells us, that the evil spirit cried out, *δέομαι σου, μή με βασανίσῃς*, I beseech you not to torment me: and Philostratus, in his narration,

^a Philostratus, lib. i. c. 4, 5.

^b Ib. lib. iv. c. 45.

^c Luke viii. 28.

says, that the spirit ἐδεῖτο μὴ βασανίζειν αὐτὸν, beseeched him not to torment it. Is it to be imagined that this similitude of expression could arise merely from chance? When we consider, on the one hand, that the phraseology of the writers of the New Testament was a very peculiar one, and on the other hand, reflect on the great latitude of expression in the Greek tongue, that Philostratus should use exactly the same words with St. Luke will appear extremely improbable, unless we suppose he had his Gospel before him.

Again, do we read in the Acts of the Apostles that Paul and Silas were miraculously let out of prison, and that their fetters fell off? Apollonius must also be vested with the power of shaking off his fetters at pleasure^d. And were the Apostles inspired with the gift of tongues? This qualification must also be bestowed on our philosopher^e. Only his historian has happened a little to forget himself; for in the course of his history, Apollonius cannot converse with Phraortes, but through the help of an interpreter.

But as the resurrection of Jesus is the capital miracle of the Gospel, it was especially necessary that Apollonius should also vie with Jesus here. Accordingly we find the hero of Philostratus rising from the dead^f, and appearing, though I think, but to one person, whom he instructed in the immortality of the soul.

These instances, out of a great many others, must convince every impartial reader that Philostratus had the Gospels before him, when he composed his

^d Phil. lib. vii. c. 37.

^e Phil. lib. i. c. 19.

^f Phil. lib.

viii. c. 31.

Life of Apollonius, and that he invented a set of miracles which might bear a striking resemblance to those of the Christian teacher.

Other internal marks of Philostratus's book being a romance, we have, in his curious discoveries of monkeys as big as men, of beasts with a human head and lion's body, of women half white and half black, of wool growing like corn, of countries abounding with phœnixes, griffins, and dragons. A book every where interspersed with such anecdotes may perhaps gain credit with one who can digest the spurious travels of Sir John Mandeville, or the wonders of Lilliput and Brobdignac; but with every serious person it must have carried its own confutation, even though we could have traced it up to the time of Apollonius.

Having detained you so long in reviewing it, and looking upon the similar exploits of Pythagoras, as related by Porphyry and Iamblicus, to be unworthy of particular notice, let us now descend to times nearer our own, to the times of monkish ignorance and fraud, shining with the glorious light of miracles, if we believe either the public decrees of the church of Rome, or pay any credit to its private writers; but, in reality, times when the simplicity of the gospel degenerated into gross superstition, and when the inventions of men, superadded to the word of God, were not more absurd, than the fraudulent contrivances to support them were numerous.

I think I may safely affirm, that many of the most noted miracles among Roman catholics are to be ranked in the class of those facts, whose credibility is destroyed by their not having been published till length of time had thrown a veil over the forgery.

Nay, so certain is this, that it is demonstrable that many of those saints, to whom wonders have been attributed, never had existence, but in the brains of the shameless interpolators and ignorant transcribers of the Old Martyrologies, or were never heard of, but in the impudent legends of the Breviary. Instances of this have been often assigned by protestant writers. Instances of persons canonized who never lived^g; of heathens converted into Christian

^g Mr. Addison in his Travels, and Dr. Middleton, from him, in his Letter from Rome, mention that the Mount Soracte is now called the Mount St. Orestes, to which saint there is a convent dedicated on the top of it. However, as two saints of the name of Orestes, whose festivals are on the 9th of November and on the 13th of December, have a place not only in the Roman Martyrologies, but are also recorded in the Greek Menæon, as having suffered under Dioclesian, one in Armenia and the other in Cappadocia, and as this latter Orestes is named expressly by Gregory Nazianzen, in his oration on St. Basil: from all these circumstances I should think that, though Soracte be now corrupted into St. Oreste, this cannot be urged as a proof that St. Orestes never existed. But many other instances of saints who never existed can be assigned. Not to insist therefore on St. Amphibolus (St. Alban's cloak) or on St. Veronica (a handkerchief) ignorantly converted into persons who, as they never were formally canonized, may perhaps be said not to be venerated by the church of Rome, though it is notorious they are venerated by the individuals of it, I shall extract from the Martyrology, published by Gregory the Fifteenth, and confirmed as authentic by a bull, instances which indisputably prove my assertion of nonentities, or things transubstantiated into persons, and prayed to as saints. In the front of the Romish calendar stands a saint Almachius, whose memory is solemnized on the 1st of January. If we consider the universal silence of antiquity as to this person, and the perplexity Baronius is under about him, supposing him to be the same mentioned by Theodoret under the name of Telemachus; will it not be thought a very probable conjecture, that, as St. Almachius is placed in the first line of the

saints^h; of heretics mistaken for orthodoxⁱ, and of

calendar, its title, *St. Almanacum*, *Sanctum Almanacum*, has been, by some ignorant monk in the dark ages, mistaken for an ancient saint? And it was easy to frame St. Almachius of St. Almanacum, especially if we suppose it written in the old way of abbreviation. If any one, in opposition to this conjecture, should urge the word Almanacum to be modern, the answer is, that it is a word as old as Porphyry, as appears by a quotation from him by Eusebius, *P. Evan.* lib. iii. c. 4. But whatever be the fate of St. Almachius, whether a real saint or only an almanac, another instance of a nonentity converted into a saint we have in Siridon, whose festival is on the 2nd of January. Baronius, in his note on this place, where we read *Sancti Siridonis Episcopi*, professes himself entirely ignorant who this Siridon was, and where bishop. And well he might; for Dr. Geddes tells us, that in some old MSS. of the Martyrology the true reading appears, and the martyr is found to be *Domnus—Antiochiæ Syriæ, Domni*; these two last words being so corrupted as to form Siridon, a person who never existed. On the 16th of February we have *Sancti Juliani Martyris, cum aliis quinq; millibus*. In this place, for five soldiers, *quinque militibus*, writ in abbreviation *Mil.* we now find *millibus*. But what is the multiplying five soldiers into five thousand saints, when we can produce an instance of a spear metamorphosed into a soldier? On the 15th of March is the festival of St. Longinus, who pierced our Saviour's side. From the Greek word λόγχη, which signifies a spear, and used by St. John in the relating this fact, has been deduced the name of the soldier to whom it belonged; and the spear being once made a man, the man was easily made a saint. I shall give but one instance more, and as strange as the last; of fourscore and three miles converted into so many martyrs. Under the 24th of July we read *Amiterni in Vestinis passio Sanctorum militum octaginta trium*. Now, from the old MSS. Martyrologies, it is evident we ought to read, At Amiternum, 83 miles from Rome, of St. Victorinus: the abbreviation of *Millaria* being mistaken for *Milites*. These instances are so flagrant, that to mention more were superfluous. Whoever would see more, may meet with them in the Tracts of Dr. Geddes.

^h Not to mention Evodia, taken notice of by Mabillon in his

moral and Christian virtues personified into martyrs and miracle workers^k. However, as the scenes of

Itiner. Italicum, nor St. Viarius, whose miracles were famous all round Evora in Portugal, till Resendius shewed that no such person had ever existed, by reading the inscription which referred to two heathens who had been appointed *Viarum Curandarum*, to repair the highways; which inscription, though very easy to be understood, was beyond the reach of Portuguese priests. Not to mention these as instances, because not countenanced by any public act of the church, the authentic Martyrology presents us with a St. Bacchus, a St. Quirinus, a St. Mercurius, a St. Romulus, a St. Nilammon, a St. Hippolytus, &c. &c. all which savour much of a pagan original. And, in particular, if we compare what the Romish church says of St. Hippolytus, with the fable of Ovid concerning the son of Theseus, of the same name, it cannot be doubted that the one story is a copy of the other. For as the pagan Hippolytus was torn asunder by wild horses, so, if we turn to the Martyrology, under the 13th of August, we read that the same fate attended the Christian martyr of that name. What still confirms this, is the giving St. Hippolytus a nurse; for the Martyrology, after relating his fate, addeth *passi sunt eodem die beata Concordia ejus Nutrix*, &c. Every one knows what share a nurse had in the story of Phædra and Hippolytus.

ⁱ Instances of heretics canonized we have in Theodosius, an Arian, on the 2nd of November; of Paphnutius, a Milesian heretic, on the 11th of September; of Felix, a schismatic, on the 29th of July, &c. &c. &c.

^k We read in the Martyrology, on the 1st of August: “*Ro-
mæ passio sanctorum virginum Fidei, Spei, et Charitatis, quæ
sub Hadriano Principe martyrii coronam adeptæ sunt.*” Now
that there should ever be three young women of the names of
Faith, Hope, and Charity, or, if there were three such young wo-
men, that they should happen to suffer martyrdom together,
must be owned to be highly improbable. And if we take it
into consideration that a day was set apart, in the old pagan ca-
lendar of Rome, to Hope, this creates a strong suspicion, that these
three are imaginary martyrs, and inserted by way of accommo-
dation to pagan prejudices, a respect to which has been de-
monstrated by Dr. Middleton, in the postscript to his letter from

the Romish miracles are not altogether *in terra incognita*, I shall take particular notice of one or two of their most boasted pretensions, which may give you a specimen of what you are to expect in most of the rest. The instances I propose to mention are the miracles ascribed to the two famous heroes of the order of the Jesuits; Ignatius, the founder of their order, and Francis Xavier, their apostle in the East Indies.

Ignatius, according to Bouhours, Maffei, and several other writers of the order of Jesus, (for above twenty of them have been his biographers,) was not inferior to any of the saints, either for the number or the strangeness of his miracles. But that these miracles were impudently forged, long after he was dead, by an order of men remarkable for their forgeries, and with the obvious intention of extending their own power, by exalting the reputation of their founder, will, I think, be pretty evident from the following particulars.

Ribadeneira, a Spanish Jesuit, was the first who undertook to give the world a life of this saint; and that he undertook it with a view to exalt the character of the head of his order, we might have supposed, even although he had not told us so himself, when he says, that he was well qualified to write the history of Ignatius, having, from his youth, been an eyewitness and admirer of his most holy life¹. As, therefore, we cannot but suppose that Ribade-

Rome, to have given rise to the glaring heathenism, as I may call it, of many rites and practices of the Romish church.

¹ Cujus ego viri historiam quoniam a puero sanctissimæ ipsius vitæ spectator atque admirator fui, pleniorem et majori rerum fide scribere potero. *Ribaden. in Præfat.*

neira, a contemporary, must have heard of Ignatius's miracles, if any had been pretended to, so it cannot be doubted that such a biographer would have gladly laid hold of an opportunity of relating them ; as the ascribing of miracles to his hero would have advanced his reputation more than any thing else that could be related of him.

Does then Ribadeneira ascribe any miracles to Ignatius ? So far is he from doing this, that we are certain, from his own declaration, not only that he himself did not believe his saint had ever performed miracles, but, farther, that this was a point universally known and agreed upon. For he enters upon an inquiry^m, in his book, whence it could happen, that so holy a man had not the gift of miracles bestowed upon him ; and the elaborate and sensible reasons which he assigns for thisⁿ, are a demonstration that

^m Lib. v. c. 13. p. 539. Sed dicat aliquis, si vera hæc sunt, ut profecto sunt, quid causæ est quamobrem illius sanctitas minus est testata miraculis ? et ut multorum sanctorum vita, signis declarata, virtutumque operationibus insignita.

ⁿ The following specimen of them deserves our perusal : "Hæc dixerim non ut miraculorum vim elevem, sed ut prudens lector intelligat, rem totam Deo committendam ; qui dona sua unicuique distribuit prout vult. Potuit ille pro sua occulta sapientia nostræ hoc imbecillitati dare, ne miracula unquam jactare possemus. Potuit utilitati, ut authore instituti minus illustri, a Jesu potius, quam ab illo, nomen traheremus : et nostra nos appellatio sacra moneret, ne ab illo oculos unquam dimoveremus : quem non solum, ut communem humani generis liberatorem ac principem, sed etiam ut præcipuum ducem collere, atque imitari debemus, minimam hanc societatem sui nominis glorioso titulo decorantem. Potuit hoc etiam tribuere temporibus, quibus hæc miracula necessaria non sunt." P. 54², 543.

The vein of humility which runs through this passage agrees but very ill with the character and conduct of the Jesuits, who

it was, at that time, looked upon as an indisputed fact, that Ignatius had not been vested with any such power.

As Ignatius died in 1557, and as Ribadeneira did not publish his Life till 1572, we may be certain that the miracles ascribed to this saint had not been invented or thought of during the first sixteen years after his death. Nay, we are certain that they were not thought of during the first thirty years; for, in 1587, Ribadeneira published a second edition of the Life of Ignatius; and though in this edition he tells us^o he has added many new particulars, which he had learnt since he published the first, from some of Ignatius's most intimate friends, and other matters, which before had appeared doubtful, but in consequence of his diligent examination he now found to be certain; yet, after all this care and diligent in-

have, ever since the foundation of their order, given the world too many fatal proofs of their arrogance and ambition; and instead of endeavouring to deserve the glorious appellation assumed by them, by a blind obsequiousness to the pretensions of the court of Rome—pretensions inconsistent with the security and independency of the civil magistrate—and by their odious attempts to sap the foundations of Christian morality, have rendered the appellation of Jesuit odious even among the moderate part of the church of Rome; and have made the penal laws of protestant states, particularly of ours, against the religion they have propagated by treasons, assassinations, massacres, and villainies of every kind, to be acts necessary for our own preservation, and not to be charged to a spirit of persecution.

^o *Multa mihi necessario addenda judicavi. Primum nova quædam, quæ post libellum excusum, gravissimi viri, et Ignatio valde familiares, et ante societatem conditam intimi necessarii, quasi testes oculati de ipso Ignatio nobis retulerunt. Tum alia, quæ dubia antea mihi erant, et diligenti postea inquisitione investigata, certa esse comperi. Ribaden. in *Præf.* ed. 1587.*

quiry, the miracles of Ignatius were still unheard of by him, for this edition is as silent about them as was the first.

This then being the case, we may well be surprised that this same Ribadeneira should, in an abridgment of his work, printed at Ipres, in 1612, ascribe miracles to Ignatius, telling us, as his reason for not inserting such accounts before, that though he had heard of them in 1572, they were not sufficiently authenticated at that time^p. But this excuse cannot serve his purpose; for it requires more subtlety than the most subtle Jesuit is master of, to be able to reconcile his asserting that he had heard of Ignatius's miracles in 1572, with his elaborate inquiry, at that very time, into the reasons why God had not vested his saint with such a power.

From all these circumstances, therefore, I think myself authorized to conclude, that the miracles of Ignatius, which, about the year 1612, were so boldly appealed to, were impudent forgeries then trumped up, at the distance of above half a century from the age they pretend to, and when a detection of them was impossible to be set about. And why a power of miracles should at that time be ascribed to this saint is obvious. The Jesuits, now that their founder had been dead almost sixty years, began to think of getting him a place in the calendar^q; and that their

^p Quamvis enim anno 1572, cum primum vitam ejus latine scriberem, alia nonnulla miracula ab eo facta novissem, tamen ad eo mihi certa et explorata non erant, ut in vulgus edenda mihi persuaderem; postea vero, quæstionibus de ejus in divos relatione publice habitis, gravibus et idoneis testibus fuerunt comprobata. Cap. 18. p. 121. edit. Ipres. 1612.

^q This was obtained of pope Gregory the Fifteenth, in 1622.

order might not be outdone by those who could boast of a St. Francis, a St. Bernard, a St. Benedict, or a St. Dominic, they were resolved to have a Saint Ignatius at their head. That no objection, therefore, might be made to his admission into the venerable list of demigods, it was thought necessary to do what other orders of religious had done before, to attribute to him a catalogue of miracles, which, at such a distance of time, could not be disproved, and the evidence of which need be but slender to be allowed of by the church, or rather the court of Rome, whose power and grandeur are most effectually supported by its claim to miracles, under the sanction of which it is enabled to exercise a boundless empire over the understandings of its votaries^r.

Leaving, therefore, our military saint, our knight-errant in devotion, to enjoy, as the reward of his fanaticism^s, equal honours with his brethren the founders of other orders, suffer me now to take under my examination the miracles ascribed to Francis Xavier, which, as they have made as much noise as,

^r It may be observed in general, in the lives of the Romish saints, that the accounts of the miracles ascribed to them are usually said to be extracted out of the authentic certificates, &c. exhibited during the process of their canonization. A most satisfying proof that they are forgeries of an age posterior to that they lay claim to; as few or none of their saints are canonized till they have been so long dead, as to make it easy to attribute any wonders to them without fear of contradiction.

^s For a view of Ignatius's character, see Stillingfleet's Fanaticism of the Church of Rome; Mr. Wharton's Enthusiasm of the Church of Rome demonstrated, in observations on the life of Ignatius; or Mr Bayle's Dictionary, under the article Loyola; to which last author I own myself principally indebted for the remarks on this saint's miracles.

perhaps, any boasted of by papists, are very proper instances to illustrate my argument.

I have now before me two lives of this famous saint, written (as we may easily have supposed, though we had not known it) by two fathers of his own order; by Tursellinus in Latin, and by Bouhours in French. But as the latter is little more than a transcript of the former, dressed out in a more elegant manner, I shall, in the remarks which I make on these miracles, confine myself to the account given us of them by Tursellinus. And that Xavier's miracles are inventions posterior to his time will appear from the following circumstances :

Tursellinus, in the preface prefixed to his first edition, laments that no one had ever thought of writing this saint's life till he had been dead thirty-five years. Before any credit can be given, therefore, to the miracles reported of Xavier, we must be satisfied that they were publicly known during the time intervening from his death ; but so far is this from being the case, that we can produce, what I look upon as most conclusive evidence, that during that time Xavier's miracles had not been heard of. The evidence I shall allege is that of Acosta, who himself had been a missionary among the Indians. His work, *De procuranda Indorum Salute*, was printed in the year 1589, that is, above thirty-seven years after the death of Xavier, and in it we find an express acknowledgment, that no miracles had ever been performed by missionaries among the Indians. For he assigns it as one reason why the gospel was not propagated by them with the same success as it was by the apostles ; “ that the power of working miracles did not “ subsist among the missionaries, who, not being

“ able to excite the admiration or the fear of the
“ barbarians, by the majesty of any such works,
“ were, consequently, despised by reason of their
“ mean appearance^t.” Is it to be imagined that Acosta
would have reasoned in this manner, if, at the
time he wrote his book, the miracles related by Tursellinus
had been ascribed to Xavier? Had such ac-
counts been public, Acosta could not but have heard
of them, as he himself was a Jesuit; and, therefore,
from his silence, we may infer unexceptionably, that
between thirty and forty years had elapsed before
Xavier’s miracles were thought of; or, which is
equally subversive of their credibility, if they were
heard of within this period, that they met with no
credit, from one who cannot be supposed deficient
either in opportunities of information, or in readi-
ness of believing them.

That the miracles ascribed by Tursellinus to Xavier are posterior to the age of Xavier, may be deduced still more clearly from the testimony of the saint himself. The mission of this apostle lasted ten years, during which time he regularly corresponded with his friends and the superiors of his order in Europe. These letters of his have been collected, and are now in the hands of the public. As they treat principally of his mission, of the progress he made, of the difficulties he had to struggle with, and the means he made use of to convert the Indians, it came unavoid-

^t Altera causa in nobis est, cur apostolica prædicatio institui omnino apostolice non possit, quod *miraculorum* nulla facultas sit:—nostri nunc temporis cum talium operum majestate sese barbaris admirandos et timendos non præbeant, nihil restat nisi ut reliqua vitæ inopia et impotentia penitus contemnatur. Book ii. c. 8.

ably in his way to mention his power of working miracles, if ever he had been vested with such a power. But so far is he from giving us the least hint of this, that he mentions a circumstance which is absolutely inconsistent with the supposition ; for, in many of his letters, he expresses himself greatly unable to do any good amongst those poor people, from his being ignorant of their languages, telling us that he had masters to instruct him, and frankly owning, that if he could not arrive at an acquaintance with them, he could do no service to Christianity^u. From Xavier himself, therefore, we are furnished, not only with a negative evidence against his having any miraculous power, but also with a positive fact, which is the strongest possible presumption against it. The end of his having a power of working miracles is supposed to be, that he might bring over the Indians to Christianity. And yet we see that he himself expressly disclaims all supernatural assistance in that very instance in which it is reasonable to believe Heaven would have assisted him, had it interposed at all ; and his not being assisted in which, rendered all other miracles, though he had performed ever so many, of no effect. For, unless he could draw consequences from the miracles, unless he could explain himself to those who were witnesses of them, they would be as far from becoming Christians as ever. The Roman catholics, indeed, think they sufficiently answer this argument, drawn from the si-

^u Among many other passages this may be quoted : “ Faxit
“ Deus, ut ad divinarum explicationem rerum linguam condisca-
“ mus quamprimum ; tum demum aliquam Christianæ rei nava-
“ bimus operam. Nam nunc quidem, inter eos tanquam mutæ
“ quædam statuæ versamur.” Lib. iii. c. 5.

lence of Xavier, by ascribing it to an excess of modesty. But silence in Xavier, as to his miracles, would have been as criminal as it would be in a general who gains a victory, to make no mention of it to his prince; or as it would be in an ambassador, to conceal the success of his negotiation from his constituent.

Another circumstance, which looks very suspicious, is furnished by Tursellinus himself. In the preface to his second edition he informs us, that whereas in the first edition he had been able to relate only those acts of Xavier which had been performed at the settlements of the Portuguese, his stock of materials had been so enlarged, that he was now enabled to relate the mighty deeds of his saint in other parts of India and in Japan. As, according to his own account, it was above thirty-five years after Xavier's death before he set about writing his life, and as several years intervened between the first and second edition of it, there can be but little credit due to those supplemental materials (which contain the chief part of the wonders) whose existence, previously to this second edition, we have no evidence of, but the interested, and consequently suspicious testimony of a Jesuit, writing, as he tells us, by the command of his superiors, and with the professed view of advancing the reputation of his newly-founded order.

These circumstances sufficiently demonstrate that the miracles ascribed to Francis Xavier cannot be traced up, by any proper evidence, to the age they lay claim to, and consequently that they are to be rejected equally with those of St. Ignatius, as labouring under the same defect.

But though the instances which I have assigned under this head (and many more, had it been necessary, could have been assigned) prove that some of the most boasted accounts of pagan and popish miracles are posterior to the age of the persons to whom they are ascribed ; there are, no doubt, many of these pretended miracles, the accounts of which are not liable to the above objection. I proceed, therefore, to my second rule, which will divest many of these pretensions of their credibility, which perhaps cannot be affected by the first.

The rule is this : those accounts of miracles are to be suspected which, though they may be traced up to the age they lay claim to, have not been published in the places where it is pretended the facts have been wrought, but been reported only at a great distance from the supposed scene of action.

The grounds on which we suspect such accounts of miraculous facts to be false, are so obvious, as to require no formal explanation. It will be sufficient to observe, that when accounts of miracles are published at a distance from the places where the scenes of them are laid, they are published to persons who, by their situation, are necessarily deprived of the proper means of examining what foundation there is for the pretensions ; and consequently, in such cases, there is full scope for fraud and imposition to play their parts. With regard to reports of miracles, the very possibility of imposition creates a suspicion of it ; and to say that a miracle is suspected, is, in other words, to say it is incredible.

Take then the Romish Breviary, or the lives of their saints, into your hands, and you will perceive what strange havoc will be made amongst their most

boasted pretensions to miracles, when they are tried by this test. To descend to particulars on this head would be endless, and instances to confirm the truth of my observation are so numerous, that they are unnecessary. Suffer me only to remark, that the miracles of Francis Xavier are as deficient in the qualifications required by the second, as they were shewn to be in the qualifications required by the first rule. And, if they could have been traced up to the time when they are said to have been wrought, their incredibility would nevertheless have been apparent from this circumstance, that the accounts of them were published at a vast distance from the supposed scene of the wonders.

For where did this saint display his miraculous power? In the extremities of the east, in India, in Japan. And where were the accounts of these facts made public; and by whom, if ever, believed? Not on the spot, but in Europe, at an immense distance^x, and consequently proposed to persons unavoidably deprived of opportunities of coming at the truth, supposing them inclined to come at it; and liable to be imposed upon by those whose private interests were connected with the propagation of an imposture. For, as it appears from Tursellinus, the original biographer of Xavier, that he composed the Life of this Jesuit by order of the superiors of the Jesuits, himself being of the same order; and it is certain that the materials out of which he composed his work were relations sent home by Jesuits, and certificates in the names of persons who perhaps never existed, at least of whose existence we could

^x At Coimbra.

know nothing, but from the attestation, the very genuineness of which is the point in debate. These circumstances would have thrown a veil of suspicion over this book, even although the author had confined himself to exalt his hero's character, without going beyond the limits of nature. How greatly, therefore, does our suspicion of fraud strengthen itself, when we find that the facts reported are so extraordinary !

There is less occasion to be very particular under this head, because I readily grant that instances of pagan and popish miracles may be appealed to, the accounts of which will stand the test of both the above-mentioned rules ; and for the rejection of which, we can have no grounds to urge, either that length of time, or that distance of place, favoured the imposture.

What then are we to say with regard to such accounts, which we cannot deny to have been made public at the very times when, and at the very places where said to be performed ? We reject them, it is true, equally with the rest : but what are our grounds for doing so, as those assigned for rejecting

^y The observation here made on the suspicious testimony of the biographer of Francis Xavier, may be extended to the biographers of all the wonder-workers of the church of Rome. Every order is concerned about its own heroes ; the others, St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Benedict, St. Bernard, St. Philip Neri, founder of the oratory, &c. &c. have respectively been indebted for their lives and miracles to writers of the orders founded by themselves. And each of these writers seems to have set out with this capital point in view, to represent the saint of his order as having performed works stranger than any of his brother saints can boast of, regardless of truth, nay vying with each other who shall assert the most impudent falsehoods.

the accounts of the miracles already examined are insufficient? These grounds, then, I now proceed to set forth, by laying it down as a

Third rule, that supposing accounts of miracles to have both the foregoing qualifications, we still may suspect them to be false, if in the time, and at the place they took their rise, they might be suffered to pass without examination.

It can scarcely be necessary to premise, that I mean not under this head to comprehend all accounts of miracles, which can be traced up to contemporary witnesses, and were published on the spot. Some of these are of such a nature as to merit no notice. For instance, when the reporters of miracles content themselves with general assertions, and vague claims to a miraculous power, without ever attempting to corroborate them by descending to particular facts; and leave us strangely in the dark, as to the persons by whom, the witnesses before whom, and the objects upon whom these miraculous powers are said to be exercised, omitting every circumstance necessary to be related by them before any inquiry can be made into the truth of the pretension; when miracles, I say, are reported in this unsatisfactory manner, (and instances of miracles reported on the spot by contemporary writers, in such a manner, might be mentioned,) in this case it would be the height of credulity to pay any regard to them in a distant age, because no regard could possibly be paid to them in their own.

It will be equally foreign to our purpose to take any notice of such accounts of miracles, which, if related on the spot with all their circumstances, we are certain, never imposed upon any body, but, from

their first publication, were exploded as forgeries, and were universally disregarded as such. For your prejudices against miracles do not arise from attempts to impose upon the world, in this way, but from the success of such attempts; not from spurious miracles being detected, but from their having passed current without detection.

Setting these aside, then, as unworthy of our attention, the accounts of miracles proper to be examined under this head, are such as were published with all the necessary means of inquiring into the truth of the pretensions, and were not exploded as forgeries at their first publication, but admitted to be true by vast numbers of people to whom they were proposed.

I lay it down as a principle not to be controverted, that in order to our having an unexceptionable testimony for miracles, we must not only be able to trace the accounts of them up to the times when, and to the places where, they are said to be performed; but, farther, we must have an assurance, from the circumstances attending their publication, that their pretensions were really examined into before they met with any credit.

It cannot, surely, be necessary to illustrate the reasonableness of this assertion. When the truth of a common matter of fact is admitted blindly, without any previous examination into the testimony supporting it, a door is opened to endless impositions. Much more is such a previous examination necessary, before we can be warranted to admit the truth of miraculous facts. For if the circumstances under which they have been published, give us an assurance that they escaped detection, not from strength

of evidence, but from want of examination, in this case, the accounts of them are as suspicious as if length of time or distance of place had rendered an examination impossible, by throwing a veil over the imposture. A miracle, the evidence of which was not inquired into by those to whom it was first proposed, ought to be rejected equally with a miracle, the evidence of which could not be inquired into.

Accounts of miracles may well be supposed to have passed without examination; first, where the miracles proposed, coincided with the favourite opinions or prejudices of those to whom they were reported, and who, for this reason, might be eager to receive them unexamined; secondly, where the accounts were set on foot, at least were encouraged and supported, by those who alone had the power of detecting the fraud, and could prevent any examination which might tend to undeceive the world.

I think I may safely challenge you to produce from ancient history, or from the more modern regulators of wonders amongst papists, any particular miracle, which if it can be traced up to contemporary witnesses, and was published on the spot, will not be instantly observed to labour under one or other, or both, of the above-mentioned defects. We shall ever find the people refusing any examination of the miracle, through a blind credulity and eagerness of belief, or the promoters of it armed with power rendering an examination impossible.

Take your *Livy* into your hands, and you will find this to be remarkably the case of the prodigies with which his history so abounds. In taking notice of a long string of ridiculous stories, published

in the fifth year of the second Punic war, (amongst which we meet with an ox speaking, with a child calling out of its mother's womb, *Io triumphe!* with a woman changed into a man, and other equally curious facts,) he^z expressly tells us, that such stories were multiplied in proportion to the credulous and superstitious disposition of those who believed them. No nation, perhaps, ever was so superstitious as the Romans, especially during the times of their republic: and this superstition was made use of by those in authority, so as to become publicly beneficial in cases of emergency. Hence the numerous and frequently repeated reports of wonders and prodigies, which the credulous and superstitious people believing without any examination, they were, by an artful management, kept in such a disposition of mind, as was suited to the state of public affairs. Accordingly we find in Livy, that when the above-mentioned prodigies were reported, the consuls consulted the haruspices, whose answer was, that these prodigies should be taken care of by greater sacrifices, and by offering up prayers at the shrines of all the gods. And there were, it seems, particular reasons why, at that juncture, it should be thought convenient to alarm the minds of the people with reports of this kind. For Livy tells us^a that, this year, six new legions were to be raised: and nothing could be more proper to engage the people to enlist willingly, than to propagate reports, the belief of which, by

^z *Prodigia eo anno multa nunciata sunt; quæ quo magis credabant simplices ac religiosi homines, eo plura nunciabantur.*
Livy, book xxiv. c. 10.

^a *Livy, ch. 11.*

awakening their superstitious fears of Heaven, disposed them to obedience to the magistrate.

Amongst all the accounts of miracles to be met with in the old Roman history, the appearance of Castor and Pollux in the battle at the lake Regillus has been most frequently made use of in our controversies on miracles. “In the early times of the republic, in the war with the Latins, the gods Castor and Pollux are said to have appeared on white horses in the Roman army, which, by their assistance, gained a complete victory; in memory of which the general Posthumius vowed and built a temple publicly to those deities; and for a proof of the fact, there was shewn in Cicero’s time the mark of the horses’ hoofs on a rock at Regillum, where they first appeared. Now this miracle, with many others of the same kind, hath, I dare say, as authentic an attestation as any which the papists can produce: the decree of a senate to confirm it; a temple erected in consequence of it; visible marks of the fact on the spot where it was transacted: and all this supported by the concurrent testimony of the best authors of antiquity, amongst whom Dionysius of Halicarnassus says, that there were subsisting in his time at Rome many evident proofs of its reality, besides a yearly festival with a solemn sacrifice, and procession in memory of it.” Thus far Dr. Middleton^b. But this miracle, with all its splendid appearances of genuineness, will not stand the test of the rule last laid down. The nature of the case suggests to us strong suspicions that the whole was a fiction of the politic general to

^b Letter from Rome, p. 194, 195.

inspire confidence into his army. The fraud, from the very complexion of it, could not possibly be detected. For in the confusion of a battle, at which time a panic is infused so easily, a report of a different kind, that will inspire confidence, will get credit as easily ; when every one is so busy as not to be allowed time to examine what foundation there is for it. It depended entirely on Posthumius himself to make his story pass current, especially amongst persons previously inclined to believe stories of miracles and prodigies on the slightest grounds. If he published it confidently, as it appears, from his vowing and building a temple, he did, others, even though they had not been as ready to believe as he to publish, durst not have entered into any examination of particulars to detect the fiction, even though an examination of particulars had been possible. Thus cherished, therefore, in its infancy, by the chief magistrate of the commonwealth, no wonder that this pretended appearance of the twin brothers should gain present credit, and be handed down to posterity, commemorated by processions and festivals^c.

The same way of reasoning will overturn the credibility of the miraculous cures attributed to Vespa-sian. The author of the *Essay on Miracles* speaks of them in the following manner : “ One of the best

^c Dr. Middleton, in his Letter from Rome, p. 195, observes, that the papists have copied from this appearance of Castor and Pollux on white horses, their story of St. George, and two other saints, not only on white horses, but at the head of white armies, in the holy war. Frequent appearances of St. James, the patron of Spain, also on a white horse, in the battles of that nation against the Saracens, are related by all their historians, and seem humble imitations, though perhaps useful ones, of the pa-gan original.

“ attested miracles in all profane history is that
“ which Tacitus reports of Vespasian, who cured a
“ blind man in Alexandria, by means of his spittle,
“ and a lame man by the mere touch of his foot, in
“ obedience to a vision of the god Serapis, who had
“ enjoined them to have recourse to the emperor for
“ these miraculous and extraordinary cures. The
“ story may be seen in that fine historian, where
“ every circumstance seems to add weight to the
“ testimony, and might be displayed at large, with
“ all the force of argument and eloquence, if any one
“ were now concerned to enforce the evidence of that
“ exploded and idolatrous superstition. The gravity,
“ solidity, age, and probity of so great an emperor,
“ who, through the whole course of his life, con-
“ versed in a familiar way with his friends and
“ courtiers, and never affected those extraordinary
“ airs of divinity assumed by Alexander and Deme-
“ trius. The historian, a contemporary writer, noted
“ for candour and veracity, and withal the greatest
“ and most penetrating genius perhaps of all anti-
“ quity, and so free from any tendency to supersti-
“ tion and credulity, that he even lies under the
“ contrary imputation of atheism and profaneness.
“ The persons, from whose testimony he related the
“ miracle, of established character for judgment and
“ veracity, as we may well presume, eye-witnesses of
“ the fact, and confirming their verdict after the
“ Flavian family were despoiled of the empire, and
“ could no longer give any reward as the price of a
“ lie—*utrumque, qui interfueret, nunc quoque me-
“ morant, postquam nullum mendacio pretium.* To
“ which if we add the public nature of the facts as
“ related, it will appear that no evidence can well be

“ supposed stronger for so gross and so palpable a
“ falsehood ^d.”

It seems to me that the ingenious essay writer, in the above quotation, confounds two things very different from each other: the evidence that this transaction happened, and the evidence that there was any thing supernatural performed. The circumstances which he expatiates so much upon, the character of the emperor, the veracity of Tacitus, the testimony of eye-witnesses, and the public nature of the facts, do indeed prove unexceptionably that the two men in question did apply to Vespasian in the manner related ^e. But that there was any truth,

^d *Essay on Miracles*, p. 192, 193.

^e For the satisfaction of the reader, I have subjoined Tacitus's account of this matter. “ *Per eos menses, quibus Vespasianus Alexandriæ statos æstivis flatibus dies, et certa maris opperieruntur, multa miracula evenere, quis cæli favor, et quædam in Vespasianum inclinatio numinum ostenderetur.* Ex plebe Alexandrina quidam, oculorum tabe notus, genua ejus advolvitur, remedium cæcitatis exposcens gemitu, monitu Serapidis Dei, quem dedita superstitionibus gens ante alios colit: precabaturque principem, ut genas et oculorum orbes dignaretur respergere oris excremento. Alius manum æger, eodem Deo auctore, ut pede ac vestigio Cæsaris calcaretur, orabat. Vespasianus primo irridere, aspernari; atque, illis instantibus, modo famam vanitatis metuere, modo obsecratione ipsorum, et vocibus adulantium in spem induci; postremo existimari a medicis jubet, antea talis cæcitas ac debilitas ope humana superabiles forent. Medici varie disserere: *huic non exesam vim luminis et reddituram, si pellerentur obstantia; illi elapsos in pravum artus, si salubris vis adhibeatur, posse integrari.* Id fortasse cordi deis et divino ministerio principem electum. Denique patrati remedii gloriam penes Cæsarem; irriti ludibrium penes miseros fore. Igitur Vespasianus cuncta fortunæ suæ patere ratus, nec quidquam ultra incredibile, læto ipse vultu, erecta, quæ astabat, multitudine, jussa exsequitur. Statim conversa ad usum manus, ac cæco reluxit dies.

either in the vision of the god Serapis, or in the cures pretended to, we are so far from having the strongest evidence, that no evidence can well be supposed weaker.

It is certain, in the first place, that both the complaints said to be cured could easily have been counterfeited ^f. The lame and blind who infest our streets can see, and use their decrepid arms or legs, when the business of the day is over ^g. Cures, therefore, may in such cases be pretended to be performed, while the spectators are the dupes of a concerted scene of imposture. The lame need only move that member, which before he did not use, and the blind open his contracted eyelids, and the work is done. To have recourse therefore to a supernatural interposition, in this case, when the whole transaction can be so easily accounted for by supposing a collusion to subsist between the men who were to pretend a cure, and the emperor, or at least his courtiers,

“Utrumque qui interfuerent nunc quoque memorant, postquam
“nullum mendacio pretium.” *Tacitus, Hist. lib. iv. §. 81.*

^f The report of the physicians, as Tacitus relates it, confirms this. According to them, “the blind man’s organs of vision were not destroyed, and that his sight might be restored on the removal of some obstacle. But what this obstacle was, and whether there was any obstacle but what the patient could create or remove himself, is not mentioned. Equally ambiguous doth their report represent the case of the lame man to be, for they tell us, “that the disorder was in the joints, and “might be remedied by the application of a healing power.” Now, such a lameness has seldom any external marks of it discernible by the eye: so that here, also, there was wide scope for imposture.

^g In March, 1759, Thomas Mitchell stood in the pillory, for the third time, for pretending to be deaf and dumb, lame, and afflicted with a paralytic disorder.

would be highly superstitious. But the possibility of there being such a collusion is not all that we have to urge ; for the relation of these pretended miracles, as given us by Tacitus, suggests strong suspicions that such a collusion actually subsisted. The eagerness of Vespasian's courtiers pressing him to make trial of his healing power, and particularly of his physicians, who flattered him with a compliment of his being, perhaps, chosen by the gods as their instrument in this affair ; these circumstances, added to this consideration, that the whole transaction was calculated to do honour to the emperor, and to add lustre to his imperial dignity, lately assumed, authorize us sufficiently in our suspicions of fraud. And when we consider that the superstitious Alexandrians, who were the persons immediately imposed upon, would eagerly believe miracles ascribed to Serapis, the god whom, we learn from Tacitus, they honoured before all others ; and, at the same time, observe that they who had all the means of detection were the contrivers and actors of the fraud, we shall then be warranted to conclude, that Vespasian's pretended miracles were not examined in the time and at the place where they were published, and that therefore they will not bear to be tried by the rule I last laid down ^h.

^h It cannot be thought I go out of my way, when I take notice here of a remarkable instance of the incorrectness, not to say of the unfairness, of Dr. Middleton, whose abilities as a writer, however admired, can never atone for those deviations from truth, with which, especially in his quotations, he has been so frequently charged. In his Free Inquiry, p. 171, speaking of the miracles in question, he says, “ The same writers (Suetonius and Tacitus) also declare that this good emperor, by a divine admonition from the god Serapis, publicly restored a blind man

I shall only add, that the manner in which, as Tacitus relates, one of these pretended cures was performed by Vespasian, so exactly resembles that which St. Johnⁱ informs us our Saviour adopted in the cure of the man born blind, as to afford a fair presumption, that the contrivers of the pagan imposture, having it in their view to check the rapid progress of Christianity, produced by an appeal to the miracles of its great founder, fabricated similar powers for their emperors: and it is very remarkable, that this honour was also conferred on Adrian, another of them, who is represented as having cured blindness by the same mode of operation.

The same insufficiency of evidence which destroys the credibility of the pagan miracles above mentioned, equally affects the credibility of such of the popish ones that can be traced up to the times

“ to his sight,” &c. &c. Now would not one who reads this imagine that the divine admonition, mentioned by the two historians, was pretended to be made to Vespasian himself? The doctor’s words can bear no other meaning; and yet it is told us, as plainly as could be, both by Tacitus and by Suetonius, that the admonition was pretended to by the men themselves who were to be cured. Tacitus’s words I have already quoted, and Suetonius’s account is as follows: “ *E plebe quidam luminibus orbatus, item aliis, debili crure, sedentem pro tribunal pariter adierunt, orantes opem valetudinis demonstratam, a Serapide per quietem.*” *Vespas.* c. 7. I shall only observe, that if the author of the *Essay on Miracles* had read Tacitus and Suetonius, as misinterpreted, or rather misrepresented, by Dr. Middleton, he might have pledged the veracity of Vespasian himself for the truth of this vision from the god Serapis, for which, at present, no other evidence can be alleged, but the affirmation of two unnamed wretches from the dregs of the people, fit tools to be employed in acting a part in an imposture.

ⁱ John ix. 6.

when they were said to be performed, and were published on the spot. For, on trying them, as I have done the former, by the test of the third rule laid down by me, we shall invariably find, that the circumstances attending them are such as must satisfy us, that the evidences on which they were supported, had this most capital defect, of having never been carefully examined, as the means of removing the suspicion of fraud being practised on the credulous believers.

What then hath been the nature and tendency of the miracles that have at any time been appealed to by the papists? They were always invented to propagate the belief of certain rites and doctrines, and practices, which had crept into the church; to advance the reputation of some particular chapel^k, or image^l, or order^m of religious; or to counte-

^k One of the most boasted miracles amongst papists is the transportation of the Virgin Mary's house from Palestine, first into Dalmatia, and then, after several changes of situation, to Loretto in the pope's dominions. A story, which, from the amazing riches heaped up in the treasury of the church built over the holy house, the presents of votaries who crowd from every part of Europe to Loretto, appears to have answered the designed end, though it be so big with absurdities, and the imposture be so glaring, that one could scarcely suppose it possible that the most lamentable ignorance and the most stupid credulity could believe it. Tursellinus, the same who displayed his talents in celebrating Francis Xavier, has bestowed a book on the wonderful migrations of the holy house.

^l The gain arising to the possessors of an image which has a reputation of working miracles, has contributed wonderfully to enlarge the catalogue of such boasted facts. The miraculous images of the blessed Virgin are most frequent. Amongst many others, our lady of Atocha, near Madrid; our lady of Montserrat, in Catalonia; our lady of Saragossa; and our lady of Halle, in Bra-

nance opinions, either such as wereⁿ contested amongst

bant, are remarkable. The last mentioned image performs daily so many miracles, that the printed list of them is greatly augmented from time to time, and now is swelled to a large pamphlet. Nay, whoever visits her church at Halle, may see a standing miracle with his own eyes. There is placed in a corner a heap of stone bullets, which, as the infallible legend sets forth, being fired into the town, when it was besieged by the Saracens, (no matter in what age or year,) the Virgin left her place in the church, walked to the ramparts, and having caught the bullets in her lap, deposited them where they now lie. Should you disbelieve this, you will be told, as a proof of its being true, that if you attempt to count these bullets, you cannot reckon the same number twice, and that if two persons count, at the same time, they cannot agree in their report. That it should be difficult to reckon, merely by the eye (for you are debarred touching, by the interposition of iron bars) between thirty and forty bullets heaped one upon another, is easy to be imagined. But that there is any thing supernatural in this, I should have scarcely thought there could be any body so credulous as to believe, had I not been upon the spot, and met with such believers.

^m The miracles of monks and friars calculated to promote the interests of monkery in general, and of the respective orders of religious in particular, are equally numerous as they are silly and ridiculous. For a specimen of them, the reader may peruse Dr. Geddes's View of all the Orders of the Monks and Friars in the Roman Church, with an Account of their Founders, &c. in the 3d volume of his Miscellaneous Tracts.

ⁿ Of this kind are the miracles of the Dominicans against the immaculate conception of the blessed Virgin, and the miracles of the Franciscans for this tenet; the former listed under the banner of Thomas Aquinas, the latter under that of Duns Scotus. A very remarkable scene of forgery, detected amongst the Dominicans in a convent at Berne, 1057, may be met with in Burnet's Travels, from p. 31 to p. 41. It is an observation, which I believe upon examination will be found to hold good, that whenever any pretences to miracles have been detected, by those who are in power, amongst the papists, these have al-

themselves, or such^o as the whole church did teach and require as points of faith. To descend to par-

ways been facts alleged in confirmation of doctrines, about which papists themselves have been divided, and the belief of which has not been calculated so much to be beneficial to the holy church in general, as to serve the interested views of jarring ecclesiastics. This has arisen from the following reason. When a miracle pretended to, was of such a nature as to confirm a doctrine, in the belief of which all the orders of ecclesiastics, that is, all the ruling part of the church, equally concurred and were equally interested, in this case it is easy to conceive that all would join in a confederacy to propagate the fact among their credulous votaries. But when a miracle has been alleged by one order of ecclesiastics, to confirm a doctrine admitted by them, but opposed by other orders; in this case, as there was an opposition of interests, there could be no general confederacy. The rulers of the church being divided among themselves, were spies on each other; and being bound in honour to support the doctrines of their respective parties, no pains were spared to examine into the miracles appealed to by their antagonists, which, of course, has produced many detections of gross impostures, and particularly occasioned the detection and punishment of the actors in the scene of villainy at Berne. A very similar instance of imposture, attempted by the Franciscans at Orleans, in 1534, was detected, and punished by banishing the contrivers. This pretended miracle, not having any reference to the general interests of the church, the civil magistrate's interference was readily obtained, and easily became effectual. See Gaillard's Life of Francis I. vol. vi. p. 460 to 466.

^o The confirmation of relick and saint worship has been a fruitful source of miracles, from the fourth or fifth century downwards. The more modern corruptions of image worship, purgatory, and transubstantiation, have had their truth attested by a variety of wonderful visions, revelations, and prodigies. Transubstantiation, in particular, has been often proved by the springing out of blood from the consecrated wafers. One of the most remarkable stories of this kind is said to have happened at Brussels in 1369. Some Jews having stolen several consecrated hosts out of a church, in contempt of the god sup-

ticular instances would in a great measure be unnecessary, because the account which I here give of these pretended miracles is on all hands agreed to be the true one. The few particulars mentioned at the bottom of the page may serve by way of illustration.

posed to be present under the form of bread, ran their knives into them, and instantly there streamed out great quantities of blood. Three of these wafers, no doubt the identical ones pierced by the Jews, are still preserved in St. Gudale's church at Brussels, where I have seen them, they being exposed with great pomp to public view, during the octave of an annual festival. For an account of this miracle, see *Délices de Pais Bas*, v. i. p. 121, 122, 123; see also *Description de Bruxelles*, p. 74 and 75. A miracle, similar to this, is related in the memoirs of Brandenburgh at the year 1279, where blood is said to have boiled up through the ground, from a consecrated host buried at Belitz. “*Les Vierges miraculeuses, les images secourables, “ et les reliques des saints avoient alors une vertu toute singuli- “ ère. Le sang de Belitz entr’autres étoit fort renommé. Voi- “ ci ce qui c’étoit. Une cabaretière de cette ville vola une “ hostie consacrée, et l’enterra sous un tonneau dans sa cave, “ pour avoir meilleur débit de sa bierre. Elle en eut des re- “ mords; elle dénonça son crime au curé, qui vint en procession “ avec tout son attirail pontifical pour déterrer l’hostie. En en- “ fonçant la pelle en terre, on vit bouillonner du sang, et tout “ le monde cria au miracle. L’imposture étoit trop grossière, “ et l’on scéait que c’étoit du sang de bœuf, que la cabaretière “ avoit versé. Ces miracles ne laissoient pas que de faire im- “ pression sur l’esprit des peuples.*” M. de Brandenburgh, p. 265. The observation of the Royal Memoir Writer, that such miracles, though they bore visible marks of imposture, failed not to make impressions on the minds of the people, is founded on this truth, that where there is a previous disposition to believe, no imposture will be too gross to be admitted, especially when the impostures are of such a kind as to be countenanced by those whose empire over the understandings of the people is boundless.

Such then being the nature and genius of the pretended miracles of the church of Rome, facts, coinciding with the favourite opinions and superstitious prejudices of those to whom they were proposed ; that the reports and accounts of them should undergo any strict examination, at the time of their being published, will appear highly improbable, when we consider, what certainly has always been the case, that the persons with whom such reports have gained any credit, had been trained up from their infancy in a persuasion that miraculous powers are continued in their church. A previous disposition of this kind, to admit miracles in general, a credulity and superstition thus ready to embrace every strange story, will naturally incline persons of this character to believe, without scrutiny, those particular miracles proposed to them, which are so framed as to be agreeable to their favourite sentiments. Nothing will be too wonderful to pass current, if it be connected with their religious opinions. This circumstance alone will reconcile all difficulties, remove all doubts, and secure from being formally detected stories which seem industriously to have been made up of the wildest inconsistencies and strangest improbabilities, as experiments how far the credulity of the multitude may be wrought upon with success.

And this leads me naturally to observe, that as the popish miracles have always been proposed to those whose superstition and prejudices previously disposed them to believe without examination, the credibility of these boasted wonders will become still more suspicious, if we add another circumstance, that they have always been set on foot, at least have

always been encouraged and supported, by those who, by their influence and power, could prevent any examination which might tend to undeceive the world. They have been the arts of the powerful few, to keep in awe the ignorant many, the forgeries of the rulers of the church, to countenance the corruptions with which they have disgraced the church; to add a sanction to doctrines and practices visibly calculated to extend their own influence, to add to their own riches, and to give themselves an unlimited command over their fellow-christians, though at the expense of their common Christianity.

This then being the case, it would have been next to impossible to have set about an examination of these pretences to miracles. For were we even to allow, that those to whom they were proposed had the best inclination in the world not to believe but upon proper evidence, the danger which must attend their giving any signs of this inclination would deter every one in his senses from attempting a detection. He who would set himself up to oppose a fraud supported by the authority and influence of the rulers of the church, in a country where, in matters of religion, the civil magistrate is guided by the priest, would soon find reason to repent of his temerity.

Can there, therefore, be any hesitation in refusing to admit the truth of miraculous facts, backed and supported by those who alone had the means of detecting the fraud, if there was any; and who, having the sword in their own hands, would never point it against themselves, to punish their own impostures^p?

^p The author of the *Essay on Miracles*, p. 193, has thought

Having employed more attention than perhaps was necessary on the extraordinary works which

proper to expatiate on the story related by the cardinal de Retz, of a doorkeeper of the cathedral at Saragossa, who recovered a lost leg, by rubbing the stump of it with the holy oil. He sets off the evidence of this miracle to the greatest advantage, as attested by a contemporary writer, a person of eminence, and of a libertine and unbelieving character; and the fact as of such a nature that there could be no ambiguity about it, and so public as to be known to all the inhabitants of Saragossa. But it is obvious that the evidence of this miracle labours under both the defects just mentioned. There was here, on the one hand, the power and influence of the clergy, particularly the canons of the church, (who are the persons quoted by the cardinal as his witnesses,) asserting and supporting a story, the belief of which, by increasing the veneration for the miraculous image of the Virgin which is in their church, (to which image the holy oil, no doubt, owed its efficacy,) would be a sure means of increasing the wealth of their community. And on the other hand, there was the blind credulity of the superstitious inhabitants of Saragossa, bred up from their infancy with a persuasion that miracles were performed by the church, zealously devoted to the worship of the blessed Virgin, and eager to embrace, without examination, whatever might do honour to the image of her, which is thought the glory of their city. There is a story in Carte's Life of the Duke of Ormonde, which I shall here quote, as it shews us how little regard ought to be paid to miracles published amongst those who are previously disposed to believe such stories, and where there is power and influence acting upon superstition and credulity. "Whilst he (the marquis of Ormonde) was there, (at Lyons,) he called at a shop to have his peruke mended. The master was a cripple, both in his hands and feet, but said he would direct his sister to mend it as it ought to be. The marquis taking another peruke from him, went to gaze about the streets, and stepping accidentally into the next church, he saw a chapel in it, which was hung with the presents of several votaries who had received cures from our lady. Among the rest, he observed an inscription as well as offering, made by the very man he had left. When he came

gentlemen of your way of thinking have usually put upon the same footing of credibility with the Gospel miracles, though the manifest fabrications of imposture, I now proceed to take into consideration another class of them—works, really performed, but which required no miraculous interposition, being brought about by the operation of causes merely natural.

Many instances of this kind might be assigned, but I shall, in a great measure, confine myself to one single instance, as most to my purpose of all others, because most insisted upon by my antagonists; an instance which has been a favourite topic in all the late debates concerning miracles, and which has furnished you and your friends with matter of triumph, as if the objections drawn from it were unanswerable. I scarcely need inform you that I am now speaking of the miracles ascribed to the abbé Paris, and said to be performed at his tomb, in the metropolis of a neighbouring kingdom, within these thirty years.

The author of the Free Inquiry into the miraculous powers of the primitive church, is at great pains to place these works in a distinguished point of view. For after filling three or four pages with an account of them, set off to the greatest advantage,

“ back to the peruke-maker, he asked him about it, wondering
“ he should do so, being still decrepit. The man answered,
“ that he thought that he was rather better than he had been,
“ and hoped that by doing honour to the lady beforehand, he
“ might the sooner enjoy the rest of her benefit.” Carte, vol.
ii. p. 180. ad an. 1658. Is it to be imagined that this fellow
would have ventured to assert this glaring falsehood, in so awful a manner, had he not known that any thing would pass unnoticed, and unexamined, that might do honour to our lady?

he concludes with the following reflection. “ Let “ our declaimers then, on the authority of the fa-“ thers, produce, if they can, any evidence of the “ primitive miracles half so strong as what is al-“ leged for the miracles of the abbé Paris : or, if they “ cannot do it, let them give us a reason why we “ must receive the one and reject the other ; or, if “ they fail likewise in this, let them be so ingenuous “ at last as to confess, that we have no other part “ left, but either to admit them all, or reject them “ all, for otherwise they can never be thought to act “ consistently^q.”

The above quotation aims only at the credibility of the miracles attested by the fathers ; but a late celebrated author on the side of infidelity, and whose opinions I have already^r examined, has urged the miracles ascribed to the abbé Paris as what affect the credibility of all miracles in general. “ There “ surely,” says he, “ never was so great a number of “ miracles ascribed to one person, as those which “ were lately said to have been wrought in France “ upon the tomb of the abbé Paris, the famous Jan-“ senist, with whose sanctity the people were so long “ deluded. The curing of the sick, giving hearing “ to the deaf, and sight to the blind, were every “ where talked of as the effects of that holy sepul-“ chre. But what is more extraordinary, many of “ the miracles were immediately proved upon the “ spot, before judges of unquestioned integrity, at-“ tested by witnesses of credit and distinction, in a “ learned age, and on the most eminent theatre that “ is now in the world. Nor is this all ; a relation

^q See Middleton’s Free Inquiry, p. 226.

^r See above, page 4 to 20.

“ of them was published and dispersed every where; “ nor were the Jesuits, though a learned body, sup- “ ported by the civil magistrate, and determined “ enemies to those opinions, in whose favour the “ miracles were said to have been wrought, ever “ able distinctly to refute or detect them. Where “ shall we find such a number of circumstances “ agreeing to the corroboration of one fact? And “ what have we to oppose to such a cloud of wit- “ nesses, but the absolute impossibility or miracu- “ lous nature of the events which they relate? And “ this, surely, in the eyes of all reasonable people, “ will alone be regarded as a sufficient refutation^s.”

What he has thus confidently asserted to the public has been often insisted on by yourself in our private debates. You used to talk of it as a point not to be disputed, that the marks of genuine miracles laid down by Mr. Leslie^t, in his Short Method with

^s Philosophical Essays, p. 195.

^t Mr. Leslie's four rules of judging of the credibility of miracles are, first, that the matter of facts be such, as that men's outward senses, their eyes and ears, may be judges of it; secondly, that it be done publicly in the face of the world; thirdly, that not only public monuments be kept up in memory of it, but some outward actions be performed; fourthly, that such monuments, and such actions or observances be instituted, and do commence, from the time that the matter of fact was done.

The Short Method with the Deists has always been looked upon as Mr. Leslie's masterpiece. It may seem strange, therefore, that the French should claim this treatise as theirs. And yet they do; for I find it inserted, with some inconsiderable variations from the English copy, in the last edition of the works of abbé de St. Real. But that Mr. Leslie was the author of this excellent book is obvious, from the following reasons. First, this piece never had a place amongst St. Real's works till long

the Deists, are applicable to the miracles ascribed to the abbé Paris; that these facts had an indisputable right to his two first marks; being such as that men's senses could judge of their certainty, and also, being performed openly in the heart of a great city, and in the presence of crowds of spectators: that with regard to his two latter marks, they were only intended as tests by which to try miracles said to be performed in a distant age; whereas the miracles ascribed to the abbé Paris had this peculiar advantage, of being performed within our own memory. In a word, that you saw no way how a Christian could extricate himself out of this labyrinth, and reject the miracles of the Jansenist^u saint, without hav-

after his death, and after the publication of it by Leslie, so that we have no authority for its being St. Real's besides that of booksellers and publishers. Secondly, the learned Le Clerc, when he attacked the Short Method, which was above ten years after St. Real's death, attributed it to the Englishman. Thirdly, the allusion to Stonehenge, and what is mentioned about Charles Blount, speak strongly for an English author. And fourthly, the French appears to be a translation, from this circumstance, that whenever it differs from the English copy, it is patched up from other parts of Mr. Leslie's works, his Defence of the Short Method, &c.

^u A short account of the Jansenists and Jansenism will be proper in this place. The Jansenists are so denominated from Jansenius, bishop of Ipres, who died 1638. His opinions gaining ground in France were complained of by the Jesuits to Rome, and condemned by Innocent the Tenth, in 1653, and by Alexander the Seventh, in 1657. In the bulls of these two popes, five propositions, said to be extracted from Jansenius's book called *Augustinus*, were condemned, and as they contain the distinguishing tenets ascribed to the Jansenists by their antagonists, I shall insert them here. First, Some of God's commands are impossible to be fulfilled by righteous men, even though they endeavour with all their power to obey them, because the grace

ing equal reason to reject those of the founder of Christianity.

by which they should be enabled to fulfil them is wanting. Secondly, In our present state of corrupt nature, man never resists inward grace. Thirdly, In our present corrupt state, it is not requisite in order to a man's having merit or demerit, that he should have such a freedom of will as excludes necessity ; that which excludes compulsion is sufficient. Fourthly, The Semi-Pelagians admitted the necessity of inward preventing grace, not only to the beginning of faith, but also to every future act of it ; but they were heretics, because they asserted that this grace might be resisted. Fifthly, The Semi-Pelagians are heretics, for saying that Christ died for all men in general. The condemnation of these five propositions gave rise to vast animosities and controversies in France, till at last, in 1668, the pope was prevailed upon to require no more from the Jansenists, than that they should subscribe to the condemnation of the five propositions in general, without mentioning their being contained in the book of Jansenius. This they agreed to ; and this transaction is usually called the peace of Jansenism. But the calm was of short duration. For so early as 1679, we find Mr. Arnaud, the famous champion of Jansenism, retiring out of France, not thinking himself safe any longer there. He was followed in his retreat by Pasquier Quesnel, a priest of the Oratory, whose Moral Reflections on the New Testament, published at Brussels in 1698, occasioned the revival of the disputes with greater violence than ever. An approbation prefixed to this book by the bishop of Châlons (afterwards cardinal de Noailles and archbishop of Paris) occasioned the condemnation of it. For the Jesuits, bearing this prelate a grudge, immediately began their intrigues, and after several unsuccessful applications, at length, in 1713, got Clement the Eleventh to publish the famous bull or constitution, usually called Unigenitus, because it begins with these words, "Unigenitus Filius Dei," &c. &c. By this bull one hundred and one propositions, said to be extracted from father Quesnel's book, were condemned as false, captious, blasphemous, ill-sounding, scandalous, impious, rash, bordering upon heresy, heretical, &c. &c. without giving any particular proposition its proper qualification. Louis the Fourteenth, now in his dotage

Such, then, being the use made of the pretended miracles of the abbé Paris^x, an examination of them

and under the direction of the Jesuits, favoured this bull so much, that cardinal de Noailles and seven or eight bishops refusing to accept it, lettres de cachet were prepared against them, when the king's death opened a new scene. The government having now changed hands, a change of measures also ensued, and the duke of Orleans, the regent, not willing to hazard the peace of the kingdom by a persecution of the opposers of the bull, by an edict enjoined silence concerning it, as the best method of deciding the controversy. This injunction of silence, as it was all the Jansenists could desire, greatly displeased the court of Rome. But though the pope threatened excommunication to those who received not the constitution, cardinal de Noailles and his party disregarded the thunder of the conclave, and appealed to a general council; hence they were called appellants. Thus far all went well with them. But Noailles, now doating, being prevailed upon to submit, the duke of Orleans dying, and the Jesuits once more getting footing at court, from that period down to the present time, the Jansenists have been under a cloud, and the reception of the bull so strenuously insisted on, as to produce the late proceedings which have ended in the banishment of the parliament of Paris.

^x It may not be unentertaining to give some account of this person, to whose intercession so many wonders have been ascribed. The abbé Paris was a gentleman of very good family of the robe, and eldest son of a counsellor of the parliament of Paris. From his earliest youth he discovered a remarkable turn for the extravagances of devotion. As he grew up, this got so far the better of his reason, that he relinquished all pretensions of succeeding to his father's post to a younger brother, and dedicated himself to the church, mortifying himself with continual fastings, and scarcely ever stirring from before his crucifix. Not thinking this enough to ensure his salvation, he quitted every advantage his birth had given him, and having sold his estate, buried himself in an obscure retreat, known only to the sick and needy, whom he administered unto and relieved. With all this sanctity, he was, in his own opinion, the greatest of sinners. This diffidence was the grand principle of his conduct; it made

becomes very necessary, and shall now be entered upon. And I am not without hope that I have it in

him punish himself with the most severe penances, tear his flesh with the most cruel flagellations, in short, practise all the extravagancies of the wildest fanatic ; a name, which, if a weak judgment and a warm fancy be characteristics of fanaticism, belonged to the blessed deacon ; an appellation which our abbé was honoured with, who thought himself unworthy of the higher order of priesthood. Having acquired a vast reputation for sanctity among the Jansenists, he died on the first of May, 1727, (not 1725, as Dr. Middleton says,) and was buried in the church-yard of St. Medard at Paris, near the south wall of the church, a tombstone being put up that covered the extent of his grave, which, from the time of his death, was frequented by his admirers. The number of worshippers increasing daily, an opinion of the efficacy of worshipping there gained ground also. By degrees it was rumoured about, that the sick had, by their prayers at the tomb, been restored to health, and cures of an astonishing nature had been wrought by the intercession of the blessed deacon ; till at length, in the year 1731, these reports having put the whole city of Paris in a ferment, and St. Medard's church-yard being crowded from morning to night with the sick, praying for relief, the civil magistrate, unable by any other means to stem the torrents and close the list of miracles, fell upon the expedient of debarring all approach to the scene of wonders by walling up the sepulchre. It was on this occasion, that the following frequently repeated distich was made, and put upon the wall.

De par le Roi—défense à Dieu
De faire miracles en ce lieu.

Our saint's miracles, after this, became less frequent though some were attributed still to him, as in the case of Gautier related by Montgeron ; and even to this day, he performs wonderful feats among the convulsionaries, whose extravagances have done so much discredit to the cause of Jansenism, that the sober part of that sect have not only disclaimed all connexion with them, but have also employed some of their ablest writers to expose their frantic absurdities. These convulsionists well deserve this appellation ; for they have amongst them adepts, who

my power to give you such a view of these boasted facts, as will satisfy you how unfair a representation of them we have had in the above quotations from Dr. Middleton, and the author of the *Essay on Miracles*, and consequently with how little reason they have been set up in opposition to the miracles of the New Testament.

An infinite number of treatises concerning them were published in France; but the pompous book of Mr. de Montgeron for, and the Pastoral Letters of the Archbishop of Sens against them, contain all that can be offered on either side, and all that is necessary to enable us to form our judgment of the affair. These I have perused with care, and shall quote with fidelity; and upon the whole, satisfy you that all the extraordinary facts ascribed to the abbé Paris may be included under these two heads: first, that in many instances fraud and imposture were fairly proved and detected; and, secondly, that the cures really performed at the tomb can be ac-

can, with pleasure, work themselves up to the strangest agitations and convulsions, practising feats which would entertain a Bartholomew-fair audience. Mr. Powel, the fire-eater, may have learnt his art among them, for they have some who are invulnerable by fire; others, again, like another set of jugglers, are impenetrable by the point of a sharp sword. In the year 1749, being at Paris, I was invited to go to one of their meetings, where I was told I should be entertained with the exploits of one of their famous heroes, who could not only bring on convulsions when he pleased, but when he was in that state, would lie on the floor and allow his breast to be beat with a stone or hammer *. Though my curiosity was not so great as to make me a witness of this myself, the person whom I had my information from had seen the operation.

* An exhibition of this kind took place very recently in London.—*Edit.*

counted for by natural causes, which I shall assign.

First, then, that fraud and imposture were detected in many instances was notorious to all the world at the very time, and is confirmed to us by all the vouchers which the nature of the thing allows. Suffer me to mention two or three from the archbishop of Sens, from which it will appear how little reason the author of the *Essay on Miracles* had for asserting “that the Jesuits, a learned body, “ supported by the civil magistrates, and determined “ enemies to those opinions, in whose favour the mi-“ racles were said to have been wrought, were never “ able distinctly to refute or detect them.”

Six of these cures had been corroborated by a verbal process taken by order of cardinal de Noailles, in 1728, before a commissary appointed by him. Three or four years after, above twenty of the curés of Paris presented a petition to Noailles's successor in the see of that city, requesting that four of these cures might be solemnly published to the people as miracles. Whence, then, their silence as to the other two? It arose from the notorious detection of imposture in the cases of Jacques Laurent Menedrieux, and Jean Nivet, which last person in particular was, in consequence of a fresh examination made in 1732, produced, and found to be as lame and blind as ever, though eleven witnesses had attested his cure in 1728, before the commissary, who chose to be content with their evidence, without requiring them to produce Nivet himself.

In a subsequent petition to their archbishop, the same zealous friends of the abbé Paris requested the publication of a great many other cures of a later

date than the four already presented by them. But fraud and imposture could be proved now as well as before. One of the cases was of the sieur le Doulx, who was said to have been cured of a fever, by having some relicks of the abbé Paris put under his head, when he was given over, and had received the sacraments. Now the imposture here was detected by the sick person himself, who, in a letter written by him to the bishop of Laon, declares that the whole was a trick of the Jansenist community of St. Hilaire, who had pressed upon him a confessor, and administered the sacraments to him, which might be looked upon as marks of his being dangerously ill, but this was far from being the case. Laleu, a lace-man, and Anne Coulon, said to be born deaf and dumb, and represented as having received their cure at the sepulchre of the abbé, were afterwards proved to have always enjoyed their faculties of speech and hearing, though in an imperfect degree. Anne le Franc was said to be cured of a complication of distempers, and, amongst others, of a disorder in her eyes. On an examination made by the archbishop of Paris, it appeared, from the testimony of all her relations, that she had never been in the dangerous way represented, particularly that she had never had any disorder in her eyes. As ingenious a piece of fraud as any, was detected in the case of the widow de Lorme, who pretended to be struck with the palsy for going to the tomb with an intention to ridicule. Her own confession of the contrivance, and other authentic documents, brought this to light.

It would be needless to multiply instances, (which I could easily do,) because those already mentioned

are sufficient to prove that some of the pretended miraculous cures were detected to be the offspring of fraud. But if this be certain, it is equally so, that in many of the cases alleged no fraud was detected. If the certainty of some of the cures could have been disputed, the archbishop of Sens^y, and other prelates, would not have laboured so much, as we know they did, to prove from the circumstances of them that they were operations of the Devil.

An examination, therefore, of those cures performed at the tomb of the abbé Paris, the evidence of which stands unimpeached of fraud, becomes necessary, and I flatter myself that I shall be able to divest them of that miraculous garb with which ignorance and credulity have dressed them up, and which infidelity and scepticism affect to clothe them in, that they may serve their purposes in their attacks against the credibility of all miracles whatever.

Miracles may be divided into two classes; of effects which are, in themselves, such as could not by any natural means be produced; and of effects,

^y The title of the archbishop's performance is, *Instruction Pastorale de Monseigneur J. Joseph Languet, Archevêque de Sens; ci-devant Evêque de Soissons, au Sujet des pretendus Miracles du Diacre de St. Medard, et des Convulsions arrivées à son Tombeau.* There are three parts, published at three different times. In the first, the archbishop endeavours to shew that the pretended miracles have neither certainty nor evidence; in the second, that the circumstances of them prove they are rather the operations of the Devil than of God; in the third, he would establish this point, that no regard is to be paid to miracles, in opposition to the body of chief pastors united to their head. Had the prelate been satisfied that he had made good his first head, the other two would have been quite superfluous.

which though in themselves such as might be produced naturally, yet could not be produced in that manner, and with those circumstances, without the interposition of some invisible power^z. When, therefore, an effect of the former kind is attested, upon a supposition that there be no defect in the testimony, the credibility of the fact at the same time establishes the credibility of the miracle. But when effects of the latter kind, effects which might be produced naturally, are, from the attendant circumstances, ascribed to invisible power, in such cases we must not content ourselves with the certainty of the facts ; but before we admit the judgment of the witnesses who pronounced them supernatural, we must enter upon an examination of their circumstances ourselves ; because these witnesses may have been misled by ignorance, prompted by credulity, or excited by views of interest, to ascribe to an invisible supernatural interposition, what really happened through the agency of causes merely natural. Let us, therefore, see to which class of miracles we must allot the cures attributed to the abbé Paris.

Now the most likely way of discovering whether any of them were beyond the reach of natural means is to take Montgeron's book into our hands, to examine the cases he has collected, and to rest this point on his evidence. When you consider how zealous an advocate for the miracles he was, you cannot but be of opinion, with me, that he has taken care to select those cases, which bore the strongest marks of a supernatural interposition ; and therefore if any cures, in themselves miraculous, could have been attributed to his favourite saint, with any

^z See the sermon of bishop Conybeare on Miracles, p. 8.

show of evidence, we might have expected to find them in his collection; but that there are none such to be met with there, I shall now satisfy you.

Considering that the book in question is a large quarto volume, one may be well surprised to hear that it contains an account of only eight cures^a. Yet this is the case: and Montgeron, I suppose, thought that a few cures, vouched by many certificates, would do more to establish his saint's reputation, than many cures vouched by few.

The first cure related by him is of Don Antonio de Palachois, a young gentleman who had lost one eye entirely, and was afflicted with a weakness and inflammation of the other. Now there cannot be the least pretence for affirming that the relief received by this patient was beyond the reach of human means. For what happened here? The inflamed eye, indeed, was cured; but, it seems, our wonder-working abbé could not restore the other, which remained as dark as before.

Or will any body pronounce the diseases of Margaret Thibault, and of Margaret Frances du Chesne, as incurable by natural means? However exaggerated by Montgeron, however artificially branched out by him into a variety of symptoms, yet, that complications of distempers, arising from obstructions in the fluids, should be curable by human means, cannot be denied. The illness of the former of these patients arose, as Mr. Reneaume (a

^a Besides the eight cures which Montgeron expatiates upon very copiously, a ninth is also produced by him, and two or three certificates concerning it are inserted. But as he himself adds nothing to corroborate it, his book may properly be said to treat only of eight cures.

physician who had originally attended her) tells us^b, from obstructions occasioned by a thick inflamed blood, which had not a proper circulation. And Mr. Costard, who had prescribed for the latter, seems to derive^c the variety of complaints under which she laboured, from the suppression of her menses, the consequence of a fall. So that in these two cases nothing more was to be done than to remove an obstruction, the removal of which would of course restore health.

The cures of Mary Anne Couronneau, Philip Sergeant, and Louisa Hardouin, three more of Montgeron's *miraculés* who were paralytic, will not certainly be pronounced beyond the reach of natural means. Palsies^d, it is well known, arise

^b Je la trouvai d'abord dangereusement malade d'une espèce de disposition apoplectique, causée par une portion de l'humeur d'une rheumatisme goutteux, ou goutte vague. Cette humeur se jettant sur le bras, y causa de vives douleurs; et comme la violence de la douleur empêchoit le mouvement de cette partie, on appelloit cette disposition paralysie. Il est à remarquer que tout le sang qu'on lui tira étoit très-épais, coigneux, et inflammatoire; le sang de cette qualité coule difficilement, et est très-propre à former des embarras. *No. 5 of the certificates about Thibault in Montgeron.*

^c J'ai été appellé pour la voir vers Pâques de l'année 1730. Elle étoit malade depuis plus de deux ans et demi. Elle se plaignoit à moi d'une douleur de côté, d'un mal de tête insupportable, d'un mal d'estomac, vomissant sa nourriture, &c. &c. La source de tant de maux venoit d'une chute que la malade avoit fait sur l'estomac, ce qui peu de tems après avoit été suivi de la suppression de ses règles. *No. 5 of the certificates about Du Chesne in Montgeron.*

^d Palsy, says Cullen, is a disease consisting in a loss of the power of voluntary motion. This loss may be owing, either to a morbid affection of the muscles or organs of motion, or to an interruption of the influx of the nervous power into them,

from obstructions of the spirits that circulate in the nerves, so that their influx into the muscles is impeded ; or from obstructions of the arterious blood. Nothing more, therefore, was required here, than to remove that obstruction ; and the daily cures of the most universal palsies satisfy us that the relief received by the three above-mentioned patients might be entirely natural. Louisa Coirin's complaint was a tumor on her left breast ; and supposing it to be a tumour of the most terrible kind, a cancer, yet have we no reason for pronouncing even this disease incurable. It is to be effected by changing the state of the blood, and therefore cannot be said to require a supernatural cause. Physicians, indeed, will tell us, that the history of physic furnishes no instance of a cancer's being cured : granting this to be true, what will it prove ? It may prove the imperfection of the science they profess, but it can never prove that a cancer is absolutely incurable : it may prove their ignorance of any human means adequate to such a cure, (and the best physicians will confess their ignorance in many instances,) but can never prove that no such means exist.

There remains to be considered, of Montgeron's eight cures, the nature of that of Peter Gautier^e, whose eye had been pierced through with an awl. And that nothing happened in his case which could which is always necessary to the motions of those that are under the power of the will. EDITOR. See Practice of Physic.

^e This cure was performed in 1733, after the shutting up of the tomb, at Pezenas in Languedoc. Another cure performed at Seignelai, the same year, on Edmée Desvignes, was the only one, of all those attributed to our abbé, published by a bishop, with solemnity as a miracle. The bishop of Auxerre, famous for his zeal as a Jansenist, did it this honour.

not be effected by natural means, every one who knows any thing of the structure of the eye must admit. To a person unacquainted with this, indeed, it may seem very surprising, that an eye pierced through with an awl should recover its vision ; and accordingly Montgeron triumphs in this, as a cure which was absolutely above the power of natural causes. And yet, instances are far from being uncommon, where the piercing of the eye did not render the recovery of sight impossible, but, on the contrary, it is the very means by which sight is restored. Particularly, the operation of couching for the cataract is performed by running a steel needle into the eye, through the adnata, by the edge of the cornea, till it arrive at the middle of the cataract. Now nothing happened to Peter Gautier's eye, but what is done without any bad consequence in the operation of couching. His eye was pierced through the cornea, and the aqueous humour dropped out upon his hand ; and in couching, the eye must be pierced in the same manner by the oculist, and the aqueous humour is sometimes lost. But then it is well known that this is a substance which is reproduced ; and therefore, neither the wound made by the sharp instrument, nor the consequences of that wound, the loss of the aqueous humour, do imply that any parts of the eye essential to vision were destroyed^f.

From the above deduction of particulars, it appears that none of the cures attributed to the abbé Paris, by Montgeron, are such as were in themselves miraculous ; so that if there was any super-

^f Besides the restoration of the pierced eye, the disappearing of two specks on the other is made a part of this miracle ; but so trifling a part, that we need not say more of it.

natural interposition in bringing them about, this must be collected from the manner and circumstances in which they happened; an inquiry into which, therefore, becomes necessary.

Now I think this must be affirmed, that there can be no pretence for calling in supernatural causes, unless, from the circumstances attending the facts in question, we may have an assurance that no natural causes operated. But how can we have such an assurance? The defenders of their miraculous nature are indeed in the right, when they tell us that there can be no natural efficacy in prostration on the abbé's tomb, or in supplication to him, to produce the recovery of the use of limbs, or the removal of dropsical swellings. But, then, they will find it extremely hard to prove, that no other natural causes, more adequate, did operate. How know we but that the cures would have equally happened, though the saint had never been applied to? How know we that the patients were not already in a healing way, when they sought relief from the abbé? Can we be absolutely certain that the strength of their constitutions had not got the better of their diseases at this particular juncture? Or might not medicines formerly taken, and other experiments tried, have contributed to the relief ascribed to the interposition of our saint? In a word, to use the observation of Dr. Middleton, “every man's experience has taught “ him, that diseases thought fatal and desperate are “ often surprisingly healed of themselves, by some “ secret and sudden effort of nature, impenetrable “ to the skill of man; but to ascribe this presently “ to a miracle, as weak and superstitious minds are “ apt to do, to the prayers of the living, or the in-

“ tercessions of the dead, is what neither sound reason nor true religion will justify.”

These reflections occur upon the first view; and even before we are able to point out any particular circumstances, which are inconsistent with the supposition of there being any supernatural interposition in bringing about the cures we now treat of. And that such circumstances can be assigned, in some of the cases insisted upon by Montgeron, I shall now endeavour to satisfy you.

And, first, the circumstances attending the cure of Don Alphonso are such as make it matter of wonder, that Montgeron should give it a place amongst the miracles of his saint. The inflammation and weakness of this gentleman’s eye, at the time when he began his *neuvaine* to the abbé, are indeed unexceptionably well attested. Yet there is not the least most distant ground for ascribing the relief he received to the intercession of the blessed deacon. For the depositions of the witnesses mention this very remarkable circumstance, that he actually, at the same time, made use of remedies prescribed by Mr. St. Yves^h, an eminent oculist, and had, for a day or two previously to the removal of the inflammation, bathed his eye with a medicine composed of a decoction of marsh-mallows mixed with some laudanum.

How ridiculous is it then to see the admirers of the abbé Paris boast of this as one of his mighty deeds! The young gentleman is troubled with an inflammation in his eye; he applies to the abbé Paris to be cured by him; but at the same time makes use of a medicine prescribed by an oculist. Which,

^g Free Inquiry, p. 79.

^h Author of a well-esteemed book on the diseases of the eye.

therefore, ought to have the honour of the cure? The dead saint or the living oculist? I believe, while the latter was employed, few will think there can be any grounds for supposing that the former at all interposed. Besides, it appears from the certificates collected by Montgeron, that Don Alphonso's eye was so much inflamed in the beginning of 1731, that he was obliged to suspend his studies; but that the use of an eye-water, prescribed by a woman, gave him temporary relief, and his eye continued tolerably well till the month of June, when he applied to our abbé. Can there, therefore, be any reason to doubt of his being relieved now by the medicine of Mr. St. Yves, when we have this instance of his being relieved before by the medicine of an old woman?

Two other of Montgeron's cures, that of Louisa Coirin's swelled breast, and that of Peter Gautier's pierced eye, seem very improper instances to prove the interposition of his saint. With regard to the former, we have no assurance from any of the witnesses produced, either of her not being in a healing way before she applied to our abbé, or of her not making use of the medicines proper for her complaint, besides her own and her servant's evidence. The whole affair is transacted in private; fraud may, for aught we know, have been practised, and the very suspicion of fraud destroys the credibility of the fact.

Or, if we consider the evidence urged in support of Peter Gautier's cure, we shall find that we have only his own word to make us believe he was blind at the time when he began his *neuvaines* to the abbé. That his eye had been pierced through with an awl, and that, in consequence of this wound, he had lost

the use of it for some time, is proved by a cloud of witnesses. But that he had not recovered the use of it long before the saint was applied to, depends upon his own single affirmation ; and how little regard ought to be paid to it, will strike every one who considers that Gautier, even according to Montgeron's account, was entirely directed and influenced by one Mr. Carissol, a priest, and a most zealous admirer of the abbé Paris. But why should I mention bare suspicions, when positive evidence can be offered, to prove that Gautier had recovered his sight before he applied to the blessed deacon ? The archbishop of Sens, in his Pastoral Instruction, discloses to us the scene of fraud. From him we learn that Gautier's own uncle gave evidence, that his nephew could see with the pierced eye within a few weeks after the accident, and fifteen months before he began his prayers. Nay, farther, it appeared that Gautier himself recanted his former story, and signed a deposition to that effectⁱ.

ⁱ If I had not proposed to confine myself to the cures related by Montgeron, I could have produced a great many from the archbishop of Sens, the circumstances of which shewed that there could not be the least ground for attributing them to the interposition of our abbé. I shall just mention one or two. Peter Lero, who was supposed to be cured of ulcers in his left leg by praying at the tomb, was in a healing way before he went thither : and no wonder that his ulcers should heal up in eighteen days, the time he employed in praying to our saint. Elizabeth Laloë pretended to be cured of a hard swelled breast, by applying to it the holy earth. But it appeared, upon examination, that she was with child, and that the swelling of her breast was owing to her having taken medicines to occasion an abortion, and therefore ceased on her being brought to bed ; and would equally have ceased though she had never used the earth

But though some of Montgeron's *miraculés* were cured, at least were in a way of being cured, before they applied to our saint, I must own this cannot be affirmed to have been the case of them all. For that the diseases of others of them were, seemingly, at the worst, and that sudden changes were wrought at the tomb on supplicants, at the very instant of their application; these are facts, which, as they could not be invalidated at the very time, it would be unreasonable to deny now. For instance, I cannot find the least defect in the evidence urged in support of the cure of Margaret Thibault. The reality of her disease is attested to us by six physicians^k, three of whom examined her only two days before she went to the tomb; and having seen her again immediately after her return from it, bear witness to an amazing change wrought upon her health, a change which crowds of spectators present with her at the tomb also attest. Nor can the archbishop of Sens invalidate the truth of this, contenting himself with a certificate of Mr. Silva, physician to the duke of Orleans; which indeed proves that her cure was not complete, she not having recovered the use of two of her fingers, but does not affect the evidence brought to prove that she was freed from other symptoms. Neither do I find that any well-grounded objection could be offered in the case of Margaret Frances Duchesne. The dropsical swelling of this patient, as of Margaret Thibault, could not be counterfeit, and the visible, sudden decrease of these swellings was a fact of which the senses of the spectators could be certain. The pa-

^k Messrs. Cointre, Reneaume, Chomel, Coldevilars, Cosnier, et De Lepine.

ralytic supplicants, indeed, Couronneau, Sergeant, and Hardouin, could more easily impose upon spectators, and pretend to be restored to the use of limbs, of which they had never been deprived. But I must own, except in the case of Couranneau¹, there does not seem the least ground for suspicion on this head: the reality of their complaints, and the sudden relief they received at the tomb, are so strongly attested, that it would be scepticism to suppose the whole was collusion and fraud.

But though I am obliged to admit some of the facts, I am not obliged to admit the consequence drawn by the Jansenists, that there was any miracle in the case. Whenever natural causes sufficient to account for an event can be assigned, it would be folly and superstition to have recourse to supernatural ones^m. If, therefore, I can assign natural causes sufficient to account for the benefit received by some of the supplicants in St. Medard's church-yard, I think I shall have effectually overturned the pretensions to a miraculous interposition.

That impressions made on the mind produce surprising changes on the habit of the body, we are as certain of, as we are certain that a change can be wrought on it by medicines, or any other external cause. The truth of this will not, I imagine, be disputed by any one, so far as it relates to a change of the habit of the body for the worse. For that

¹ The archbishop of Sens would have us believe that this woman was cured before she went to the tomb. But, on comparing what he advances with the certificates produced by Montgeron, I cannot think he has detected any fraud in this case.

^m Nec deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus. HOR.

diseases often take their rise from the affections and passions of the mind, is a fact confirmed by experience in a vast notoriety of instances. Can there be any thing more incontestably true, than that care and anxiety, disappointment in what we have ardently wished for, and loss of what we have affectionately loved, by preying upon the mind and engrossing all its attention, will disorder the whole frame of the body, and become the source both of chronic and acute complaints ?

But not to insist upon the more silent and slow workings of a settled melancholy, ruining and undermining the health by degrees, equally agreeable to experience, and more apposite to our present purpose, are instances of sudden and alarming disorders, occasioned by the violence of impressions made by fear, by anger, by joy. If your own experience has not brought any such instances within the reach of your knowledge, the historian will tell you they have happened, and the physician will corroborate his testimony, and assign the cause.

Remarkable in the histories of France is the story of John de Poictiers, count de St. Valierⁿ. Con-

ⁿ This account of John de Poictiers I have from Moreri.
“ Diane de Poictiers, duchesse de Valentinois, célèbre sous le
“ regne de Henri II, étoit fille de Jean de Poictiers, comte de
“ St. Valier. Diane gagna par sa beauté le cœur de la plus part
“ des grands de la cour. Jean de Poictiers son père fut con-
“ vaincu d'avoir favorisé les desseins et la fuite de Charles, con-
“ nétable de Bourbon. On l'arrêta à Lion, où le roi François I.
“ étoit ; et depuis on le condemna à perdre la tête. Le déplai-
“ sir qu'il eut de se voir perdu fut si grand, qu'en une nuit les
“ cheveux lui blanchirent si absolument, que ceux qui l'avoient
“ en garde le prirent le lendemain pour un autre. Il tomba
“ même dans une fièvre si violente, qu'encore que Diane sa fille
“ eût obtenu sa grace, il ne put jamais guérir, quelque remède

victed of being an associate in the conspiracy of the constable of Bourbon against Francis the First, and condemned to lose his head at Lyons, the fear and other violent passions with which his mind was distracted, had such an effect, that in one night his hair was turned so entirely grey, that the officers of the prison took him next morning for another person. But this was not all, for he was seized with so violent a fever, that though his daughter Diana, famous under the name of duchess de Valentinois, had by her charms procured his pardon from the king, no remedies, though all that physic could dictate were used, were able to prevent his death.

An instance of a similar kind happened to Henry the Fourth of France, and we have the best authority, his own word, for its truth. Matthieu, his historian, says that he was present when the king told the marquis de la Force, that when he heard the unexpected and mortifying news, that Henry the

“qu'on y apportât. Ce de là qu'est venu le proverbe de la
“fièvre de St. Valier.” *Moreri, artic. Diane de Poictiers.*

As Thuanus's account of this story differs somewhat from Moreri's, I shall also insert it: “Diana patrem habuit Joannem
“Pictaviensem, Sanvalerium, qui Caroli Borbonii conjurationis
“particeps, cum apud sacerdotem rem secreto confessus esset,
“a sacerdote delatus, et ad mortem damnatus est. Cum ad
“supplicium duceretur, ex pavore in tam acutam febrim incidit,
“ut venia in gratiam filiæ a Francisco impetrata, vix ad mentem
“et sanitatem, sæpius misso sanguine, reduci potuerit; unde
“Sanvaleriana febris apud nos in proverbium abiit.” *Thuanus,*
lib. iii. ad an. 1547.

But father Anselme, in his *Palais d'Honneur*, p. 555, more conformably to Moreri's relation, says that St. Valier saw death so near him, and was so greatly terrified on that occasion, that, when brought back to his house, a fever seized him with so much violence that he died.

Third had published the edict of July 1585, (by which every Hugonot was ordered either to go to mass or to leave the kingdom in six months,) he was so greatly affected, that in an instant the mustacho or whisker on that side of his face which happened then to rest upon his hand was converted into grey^o.

But as relations of this nature will perhaps have greater weight when vouched by writers in the medical way, I shall refer you to the operations de Chirurgerie of Verduc, who not only relates facts of this kind, but also assigns the cause^p.

^o Henri IV. dit au marquis de la Force, en présence de Matthieu, qui le rapporte, liv. 8; qu'au moment qu'il apprit cette indigne foiblesse d'Henri III, sa moustache blanchit tout d'un coup, du côté où il tenoit son visage appuyé sur sa main. *Mémoires de Sulli*, tom. i. edit. 1747.

Another remarkable story of this kind, too long to be transcribed, may be seen in Howel's Letters, p. 179.

^p For many curious and surprising instances of the effects of the imagination of the mother on the fœtus, the reader may consult Fienus, who is very copious on this subject, in his *Treatise de Viribus Imaginationis*; Malebranche's *Recherche de la Vérité*, b. ii. c. 7. and Dr. James's *Dictionary*, under the article of *Imagination*. As some physicians pretend to doubt, nay, to laugh at such stories, it may not be improper to subjoin the opinion of Dr. Mead, and his testimony to their truth. “ Quid mirabilius iis, quæ in graviditatibus non raro contingere videmus? “ Fæmina in utero gestans, si forte quid appetiverit, et frustra sit, interdum rei concupitæ figuram quandam, aut similitudinem, in hac aut illa corporis parte, fœtui suo imprimet. Imo, quod majus, et prodigii instar, subita partis alicujus læsione perterrita matre, ipsa illa pars in infante noxam sentit, et nutrimenti defectu marcescit. Scio hujusmodi omnes historias a medicis nonnullis, quoniam qui talia fieri possunt haud percipiunt, in dubium vocari. At multa, quæ ipse vidi, exempla mihi hac in re scrupulum omnem ademerunt.”

Impressions made upon the mind, by acting upon the blood and spirits, (a power which we know they have, in consequence of the intimate union that connects the two parts of our nature,) may be the means of determining too great a quantity of fluids to a sound part, which stagnating there, nature may become oppressed, and the tone of the solid parts receive a preternatural distention. And that a vast variety of diseases may be thus occasioned, you will see confirmed by the authority of Fienus in the note^q; an authority which you will hardly dispute, as I can corroborate it with that of one still alive, whom not to call the ornament of his profession would be unjust, and to say more of him would be impertinent^r.

Not to enlarge, therefore, on such facts, as more instances of them would be unnecessary, I shall now proceed to observe, that impressions made upon the mind may also have an efficacy to change the habit

^q *Phantasia est causa motus humorum et spirituum in corpore. Motu humorum et spirituum possunt varii, imo omnis generis, morbi in nobis causari: nam motu humorum possunt fieri obstructiones, et consequenter apoplexiæ, calculi, asthma, dysuria, cæcitas, &c. ulcera, et apostemata interna: motu spirituum possunt fieri deliquia, vertigines, &c. Imo videtur quod homo per suam imaginationem posset se fere afficere quocumque morbo vellet. Etenim—imaginatio habet vim directoriam: ergo potest humores in quamcunque partem determinatam dirigere, et in ea morbum facere, imo etiam hunc vel illum morbum determinare. De Viribus Imagin. p. 91.*

^r Dr. Mead, whose words are, *Annon hominem pessundare vehementes animi affectiones sæpe experiuntur? Subitus terror multos interemit; et ipsa quandoque supra modum exultans lætitia fuit exitio. Medica Sacra, p. 70.* See also Dr. Nichols's *Anima Medica*.

of the body for the better, as well as for the worse, and to restore as well as to destroy health.

And, indeed, this is a direct consequence of what has been just observed. For as the blood and spirits may be set in motion by impressions made on the mind, it must be allowed that such motions, according to their different determinations to particular parts, will remove or bring on diseases. Nay I should even think, that it is much easier to account for relief being received in this manner, by a diseased person, than to account for the alterations made on persons in health. For by the operation of the passions of the mind on the spirits^s, they may be so determined, as to produce great alterations in the motions of the blood, and to communicate such life and briskness to it, as will have a natural efficacy to give relief under diseases whose seat is in the fluids. By these means may the obstructed canals be opened, the stagnating juices may resume their

^s If I speak improperly, I hope the learned faculty will excuse the inaccuracy of one who is a stranger to the arcana of their profession, on a point concerning which they themselves are divided. That a fluid, distinguished by the name of spirits, and animal spirits, and circulating in the nerves, is the immediate instrument by means of which the mind acts upon the blood, and affects the habit of body, has formerly been the orthodox opinion in physic. But it seems modern refiners, more inquisitive and knowing, at least pretending to be more so than their predecessors, dispute the existence of such a fluid at all, and in its place have substituted certain vibrations of the nervous system, &c. &c. Whether such a fluid exists or no, is to my argument a matter of indifference: and when I make use of the term spirits, I mean the immediate instrument of the mind's action on the body, whatever it be; and which, though we should confess our ignorance of its nature, must be at least owned to exist.

lost circulation, and the relaxed solids recover that proper tone, which a sound part, oppressed by too great a quantity of fluids, could not preserve.

What appears thus agreeable to reason has been indisputably confirmed by experience; and instances, unexceptionably well attested, of diseases being alleviated for a while, if not totally removed, by passions excited in the mind, by fear, by terror, by anger, by joy, may be appealed to, for the conviction of those who have not seen such facts fall under their own observation.

A case of this kind, related by the count de Chavagnac, in his Memoirs, to have happened to himself, occurs to me at present. The count, then a general in the imperial army, was laid up in bed with a fit of the gout, when an alarm was raised of the march of the marechal de Turenne to surprise their quarters. Though he was not able, before, to move either hand or foot, the fear of falling into the hands^t of his countrymen, the French, wrought a kind of instantaneous miracle on him: for he got out of his bed, dressed himself, and having placed himself in his coach, all this without help, was conducted to a safe retreat^t.

^t M. de Turenne ayant été joint par son secours, marcha pour enlever les Lorrains dans leurs quartiers. Ceux-ci en ayant eu l'avis, se retirerent toute la nuit. L'alarme fut si vive, que M. de Lorraine me vint trouver pour me dire que dans quatre heures M. de Turenne seroit à nous, et que Bournonville avoit donné rendezvous aux troupes à cinque grosses lieües de là. Je souffrois cruellement dans mon lit, et ne pouvois seulement mouvoir les pieds, ni les mains, tant la goutte m'avoit saisi. Mais la peur de tomber entre les mains des François fit un miracle sur le champ. Car je me levai moi-

But how trifling an instance is this when compared to the story related of the famous monsieur Peiresque, by Gassendus? The palsy had deprived Peiresque of the use of his right side, and also of his speech. Lying in this helpless condition, he received a letter from his friend Thuanus, which he read with a degree of joy: and having, immediately after, heard a song finely sung, he was so transported with the sweetness of it, that, like the son of Croesus, eager to express what passed within his breast by words, he actually did so, by breaking out into an exclamation in praise of the song; and from that moment his paralytic members recovered their freedom and activity^u. If we consider Gassendus's cha-

même, m'habillai, et me mis dans ma calèche, d'où l'on me conduisit à Cassel, où j'avois envie de me retirer. *Mémoires de Chavagnac*, p. 332.

^u Corripuit illum (Peireskium) insignis quædam paralysis, ad dextras omnes corporis partes. Scilicet extra limen domus considerbat, reclinatumque forte habebat totum corpus in dextrum femur, cum subito sensit ejusmodi femur non leviter obstupefactum. Conatus loco emovere, nisi adjuvante famulo non potuit, neque deinceps incedere ob similem cruris, pedisque stuporem. Perrepsit continuo in brachium affectio, adeo ut scriptoris fuerit incapax. Serpsit et in linguam, quæ proinde hæsit, ac licet nonnihil balbutire, murmurareve videretur, voces tamen distinguere, dearticulareque non potuit. Subiit quoque aurium tinnitus, qui, nisi aliis partibus simul solutis, non evanuit. Est autem facta solutio post exactam hebdomadam, occasione hilaritatis admirationisque subnata. Cum allatæ nimirum fuissent literæ a Thuano—lætitia quadam gestiit; et cum subinde nescio quis hymnus in Lili Rosæque amores scite caneretur, ita captus est suavitate cantus et strophes cujusdam lepore, ut, quemadmodum Croesi filius, prorumpere volens in aliqua verba, ac in ea speciatim quam pulchrum hoc est! prorsus in illa proruperit, eoque momento libertas fuerit membris omnibus restituta. *Gassendi Opera*, vol. v. p. 307.

racter as a grave and serious philosopher, and recollect the opportunities he had of informing himself as to the particulars of the life of Peiresque, who was his patron, and with whom he generally lived, we must own that there is not the least room for doubting the truth of this anecdote, which is a very remarkable confirmation of my hypothesis, that the passions and affections of the mind can communicate health to the body.

But, as I observed before, in such cases as this, the verdict of the physician is more conclusive than the narration of the historian. And that we have the verdict of physicians confirming this conclusion of the mind's being able to relieve the diseases of the body, I may boldly affirm. If then the judgment of one, whose authority is as venerable as his antiquity is great, be decisive, as it certainly will be allowed, I can boast of having the illustrious father of physic on my side, and can quote Hippocrates expressly recommending it as being of great service in certain diseases, to excite, in the minds of the patients, impressions of anger, of fear, and the like^x. A judgment this, in which he is far from being singular, as it is supported in the strongest manner by Aretæus^y, Paulus^z, and Galen^a, whose opinions I shall refer to in the notes.

^x Επιτηδεύειν ὁξυθυμίην ἐμποίειν καὶ χρώματος ἀναλήψιος ἔνεκα, καὶ ἔγχυμώσιος, καὶ εὐθυμίης, καὶ φόβους, καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα. Hipp. de Morb. vulg. lib. ii. §. 7. Frankfort. vol. ii. p. 119.

^y Lib. i. de Cur. Morbis diutur. in morbis epilepticis, &c. consult ὁξυθυμίαν.

^z Paulus seems to allude to the above quotation from Hippocrates, when he says, δεῖ δὲ καὶ ὁξυθυμίας ἐμποιεῖν τοῖς ἀχροοῦσι τε καὶ ἀτροφοῦσι, καὶ συγκινήσεις ψυχικάς. Lib. i.

^a Galen's remark on the above quotation from Hippocrates

What the physicians of the ancients thus admitted, those of modern times equally confirm. Thomas Fienus, who wrote in the beginning of the last century, and whose book, *de Viribus Imaginationis*, has been already quoted, is as express in his opinion that the imagination will cure, as we have seen in a former quotation from him, that it will cause diseases. His eleventh disputation is on the very point, and he confirms his conclusion from the authorities of former physicians, from particular facts appealed to, and from arguments which I need not repeat^b.

is very judicious, and expresses clearly the manner in which the passions of the mind contribute to restore health. 'Επὶ γοῦν τινῶν ἐκλελυμένων σφόδρα δξυθυμίαν τινὰ τῷ ἀρρώστῳ δ θαυμάσιος Ἰπποκράτης γίνεσθαι συμβούλεύει, ἵνα τῷ εὐτόνῳ τῆς ὀρμῆς, τὸ ἀτονον τῆς ἐκλύσεως ἴαστόμεθα. In Lib. de Theriaca. Opera Gal. & Hipp. v. 13. p. 945. ed. Paris.

^b If Fienus be of this opinion, whence is it that I find him quoted by the late bishop of Litchfield, as follows: “ It is a “ conclusion of Fienus, which he supports with several reasons, “ that the fancy or imagination cannot of itself cure any dis- “ eases, not even such as are plain and simple, such as the hec- “ tic or dropsy, which he instances in.” See Smalbroke’s Vindi- dication of the Miracles of Jesus, vol. i. p. 226. When I read his lordship’s book, which was long before I had ever met with Fienus, I concluded from the above specimen, and the manner of its being applied, that Fienus denied that the imagination was of any efficacy in curing diseases. But I find, from the per- using the book itself, that no author on the subject attributed more to it than he does. When he asserts, therefore, which he does in his 38th conclusion, p. 171, that the fancy cannot of it- self, *per se*, cure diseases, he means only to affirm (for his book abounds with school distinctions) that it is only a remote cause of cures. For in his 32d conclusion, he lays it down as follows: “ Phantasia ergo alterat & immutat corpora, mediante motu hu- “ morum & spirituum—ex quo notandum Phantasiam esse cau-

But the efficacy of impressions made on the mind, in restoring health to the body, is no where more copiously insisted upon than by Pechlinus, another eminent and more modern physician, in his *Observationes Physico-Medicæ*: in that work we meet with several relations of cures effected in this manner. According to this author, fevers, agues, gouts, have been got the better of by exciting terror or surprise in the mind of the patients. And, what is still more extraordinary, he mentions the case of a physician at Hamburgh, cured, by this cause, of a rupture^c. And if terror can perform such cures, so

“ sam valde remotam & per accidens,” p. 154. Fienus, therefore, by asserting that the passions of the mind can set the blood and spirits in motion, admits all that I affirm; for no one ever imagined that the bare fancy, of itself, and without acting on its proper instruments, could cure diseases.

^c Est nonnullorum ea conditio, ut ab animi affectibus magis quam ulla alia re commoveantur, acto statim in effervescentiam sanguine, aut plane composito; utrumque autem terrori proprium videtur, ut nempe metum vel iram participat. Quidquid demum id sit, vehemens ejusmodi affectus mutat in totum spirituum crasin, qua mutata, etiam sanguini novum induci habitum necesse est. Febres plurimas quas remediis vulgatis frustra solicitari vidimus, terror nonnunquam sanaverit. Quartanas etiam, quis credat, utut lentas et pituitosas febres, terrore profligari vidimus:—Piissimum virum cum quartana diu conflictatum, et hinc, Amstelodamum, tendentem, vehiculi casus, humerique luxatio a febre liberavit, terrore, haud dubie, crasin sanguinis evertente. Quam vero sæpe etiam arthritidem terror, metu permistus sanavit? Sed majus est solida ipsa terrore uti labefactari, ita et restitui in integrum. Medicum ego olim novi Hamburgi—Hic inter cætera, quibus adfligebatur, mala etiam hernia laborabat plurium annorum carnosa; hanc ipsam aliquot mensibus ante mortem terror percuravit, retracto, ad improvissum nuncium, in inguina tumore, nec postea amplius, res mira, viso. *Pechlin. Obs. Physico-Medicæ, Hamb.* 1691. p. 453 and 454.

also does he give us instances of similar effects produced by joy. Two cases, of a gout and of an inveterate ague and jaundice, he relates as what he was witness of himself, where health was restored to both patients (after every usual remedy had been tried in vain) by the joy they felt on hearing good news. He also mentions the cure of Conringius, the famous juspublicist, on the authority of his son-in-law Dr. Schelhamer, who assured him that Conringius, labouring under an ague, was cured without the help of medicines, and merely by the joy he felt from a conversation with the learned Meibomius^d.

After what has been offered, then, on this head, you cannot, I think, be so incredulous as to doubt that diseases, of the most obstinate kind, may be, and have been, cured, at least alleviated, without the application of the ordinary remedies, but merely by the operations of passions excited, or impressions made, on the mind of the sick person.

If, therefore, I can now satisfy you, that the above general reflections are applicable to the parti-

^d Vidi—ubi oblati consulatus nuncium Titium a podagræ doloribus, quos graves pertulerat, momento liberaverit, et sui membrorumque potentem fecerit. Jam alii ex tertiana laboranti diuturna icterisque symptomatibus comitata, cum post plurimum annorum sterile conjugium ad tertias accessisset nuptias sexagenario vicinus, a nuncio nati ex juvencula conjuge filii conceptum gaudium, cum nihil hactenus profecissent remedia, lentam febrim ejusque sobolem, icterum, feliciter profligasse et ipse testis sum. Conringium etiam olim, incomparabilem virum, et πολυμαθέστατον, ex tertiana ægrotantem, non remediorum apparatus, sed conceptum ex magni Meibomii sermonibus gaudium unice restituit, quod ex insignis ejus generi D. D. Schelhameri ore habeo. *Pechlin. Ob.* p. 466, 467.

cular cases of those who received benefit by praying at the abbé Paris's tomb, and that they had their minds properly disposed, by such impressions made on them, I think I shall have sufficiently established the truth of my proposition, that the facts attributed to the miraculous intercession of the blessed deacon were brought about by natural causes.

The first and most obvious reflection is this, that the diseases were of such a nature as could be overcome by the action of the mind on the body. From the instances just quoted, we may observe that gouts, palsies, fevers of all kinds, and even ruptures, have been thus cured: and that, in general, all diseases, arising from obstructions and other disorders in the blood and spirits, may be thus relieved. Now it is obvious from the account we have given of the cures attributed to the abbé Paris, particularly of those where the change wrought on the health was sudden, visible, and made at the tomb^e, (which are the only ones to the purpose,) that they were of a similar nature; and, therefore, could be brought about by similar causes.

It is also to be observed, that the cures in question were performed on persons whose minds were neither under any natural, nor under any accidental incapacity, of affecting the habit of the body. They were all grown up to such a maturity of age, that impressions of every kind were capable of being made on their minds.

But though it appears from this that the cures performed at the tomb of our abbé might possibly

^e Couronneau, Sergeant, and Hardouin were paralytic; and Thibault and Du Chesne's disorders arose from obstructions which put on the symptoms both of palsy and dropsy.

have been effected by impressions made, and passions excited in the mind, yet, that there may not remain the least doubt that they ought to be attributed to this cause, I shall now proceed to observe, that the supplicants who received any benefit actually had their minds so prepared and disposed, and such passions excited in them, as were likely to have an effect on the habit of the body, and relieve them under their distress.

What, then, was this affection of the mind, and of what kind were those impressions, under the influence of which the supplicants in St. Medard's church-yard were, at the time when they received relief? An enthusiastic persuasion of the efficacy of the means they made use of, an unshaken confidence of success, and a vast expectation that they were to be cured by the intercession of the saint they prayed to.

That the patients who received benefit at our abbé's tomb were actually under the influence of such a disposition of mind, is not to be doubted. For we cannot conceive that a higher instance of veneration can be assigned, than the offering up of prayers; and they who came to the tomb for the express purpose of soliciting the intercession of our saint, certainly came to it prepossessed with an high opinion of his sanctity, and firm belief of his power. Their minds, therefore, being thus heated and inflamed, and every faculty of their souls burning with the raptures of devout joy and enthusiastic confidence, must it not appear far from being impossible, after the instances we have assigned above, that in some cases, a change might be wrought on the habit of the body? The passions and impressions which prompted them to apply to the abbé in prayer, are

not unsimilar to those which could convert a letter and a song into a medicine curative of Pieresque's palsy, and the conversation of Meibomius into an effectual remedy for the ague of Conringius.

That the eager confidence of the patient in the skill of his physician, and the firm expectation of relief by his means, have sometimes a wonderful efficacy in restoring health, is a point not to be doubted of. Fienus, already quoted, besides corroborating this opinion by the authority of Galen and others, tells us, that in general all physicians subscribe to it: and he gives us several instances of cures brought about by the use of means, in themselves of no efficacy, if not ridiculous, nay which to all appearance were hurtful, but which the strong desire and confidence of the patients endowed with a sanative virtue^f. Pechlin also is very full, to the same purpose. In his opinion, vast is the power of the mind in determining the operation and efficacy of medicines. It will, according to him, not only diminish or increase their usual effects, but also change them to a manner of operation directly contrary; and communicate a healing quality to the most inadequate means, even to a bread pill disguised as a medicine, and swallowed with a vast confidence in the skill of the person who administers it^g.

If, then, in the judgment of physicians, the confi-

^f *De Viribus Imaginationis*, p. 169, 170.

^g Adeo in remediorum effectibus moderandis, variandisque multum quoque imaginationem posse, experimentis didici: nunc etiam auget, nunc minuit, nunc etiam alio atque alio convertit medicaminum efficacium. Observavi medicaminum facultates ab imaginatione ad illum effectum determinari quem quisque sibi animo, certo eo, atque obstinato, fingit, &c. &c. *Pechlin.* *Obs.* p. 420.

dence of the patient can give efficacy to remedies in themselves insufficient, why should it be thought at all more extraordinary that a strong confidence and expectation of relief should operate in such a manner upon some of the supplicants of the abbé Paris, who may be considered as their physician, as in some few cases to give a medicinal and healing virtue to their prostrations and prayers at his tomb, and to convert the holy earth applied externally, or drunk, mixed with water, into an efficacious remedy?

What has been already offered certainly warrants us to account for the cures now before us, in this manner. However, to make our conclusion still more indubitable, suffer me now to observe, that from the accounts which we have, of the circumstances attending the prayers of those who received relief at the tomb of the abbé Paris, we are certain that the enthusiastic confidence with which their minds were impressed actually did affect their bodies in such a manner, as to become a cause, the operation of which had a visible tendency and remarkable efficacy to work a favourable change on their health.

That enthusiasm should warm its votaries to a holy madness, and excite the wildest transports and agitations throughout their whole frame, is an effect, which in a country so fruitful of this production as is ours (though enthusiasm be the product of every soil and of every religion) must be consistent with the experience of many. I myself have seen the singing of psalms have so violent an effect on an enthusiastic devotee, that, being heated to a phrensy, she trembled with agony, in a manner foamed at the mouth, and uttered such hideous cries, that it be-

came necessary to gag her, and carry her out of the public assembly where this happened^h. But such phenomena are, I believe, extremely common in the tabernacles of the fanatic Methodistsⁱ, as they have been before amongst their predecessors, the French prophets: and such were the usual spectacles furnished to the public, for several months, in the churchyard of St. Medard, and particularly by those very persons whose cures are boasted of.

The passions of the mind, as we have observed, operate on the body solely by communicating certain motions to the blood and spirits. And hence it is that this cause has so few striking effects, as it can act only by the intervention of instruments, over which its power, in most cases, is very limited. But when these instruments obey, when the pas-

^h This was at Ghent in Flanders, during the winter of 1744, in one of the places assigned to the British troops (who then composed the garrison of that city) for their public worship. The poor woman, wife of a soldier belonging to the Welsh Fusileers, came next morning to me, (as I had been the chaplain who then officiated,) asking pardon for having been the occasion of interrupting the service of the church, by her transports, and ascribing what had happened to her to a divine impulse.

ⁱ The journals and other works of Wesley and Whitfield furnish an inconceivable number of most curious instances of this kind amongst their misled followers. But as the writings of these gentlemen, already almost as much forgot as if they had never been published, may be difficult to be met with, the reader will have full satisfaction, by consulting that excellent treatise, the *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists compared*; a new edition of which has been lately published by Mr. Polwhele; in which the folly and absurdity of methodism are so clearly pointed out, that it is amazing so many, who would neither be thought deficient in sense, nor mistaken in their notions of religion, should still continue under this state of superstitious enchantment.

sions and impressions made on the mind can excite such a ferment throughout the whole frame of the body, as was usual amongst the supplicants of the abbé Paris, then may we pronounce with a certainty, that, in such circumstances, if ever in any, impressions made on the mind will be able to work a change on the health. For in this case we are certain that the nervous system is strongly acted upon, and that fresh and violent motions are communicated to the fluids; and it is obviously a conclusion, which common sense will dictate, and which no one ever disputed, that whatever can have this effect must have a natural tendency to give relief, in a variety of diseases whose cause may be traced from obstructions, and other disorders in the stagnating fluids and inactive nerves.

It is on this principle that physicians account for a palsy being cured by an attack of a fever; instances of which are to be met with in their practice. For as the cause of a palsy is an impeded influx of the spirits, that fill the nerves, into the muscles, or of the arterious blood into its vessels, it is not to be wondered at, that the accelerated motions communicated to the spirits and blood by a fever should sometimes be able to remove another disease, which had arisen from obstructions of them. And if a paralytic disorder may be cured in this manner, can there be any reason for refusing the same efficacy to the convulsions and agitations of Sergeant, Couronneau, and Hardouin; as such agitations necessarily suppose that the velocity of the fluids of their bodies was greatly accelerated^k?

^k Montgeron, in describing the circumstances of the cures of his paralytic *miraculés*, tells us of their nerves being seen by

Again, as one of the curative indications of a dropsy is an evacuation of the water by perspiration, and as the medicines administered by the physician aim to produce this effect, need we be surprised that the dropsical swellings of Thibault and Du Chesne should decrease, when we learn, from the certificates which are preserved by Montgeron, that the sweat ran from them, at the tomb, and after they returned home, in vast quantities? And what could be more likely to excite such copious perspiration, than the enthusiastic transport with which they prayed, and the convulsive struggles which shook their whole frame?

Upon the whole then of this argument. As it appears that none of the cures ascribed to the miraculous intercession of the abbé Paris can be pronounced beyond the reach of natural causes; as I have assigned, from historians and physicians, incontestable instances of changes wrought on the habit of the body, by the operation of impressions made on the mind, changes as remarkable and uncommon as any of those wrought on Montgeron's

the spectators, to vibrate under the skin, nay, heard to crack, with the violence of the motions communicated to them. Motions, which of course would excite such a ferment in the fluids, as might easily remove those obstructions which occasioned their disease. Had the methodist woman, whose transports I was a spectator of, laboured under a like complaint, the violent motions communicated to her nerves might probably have given her relief. And had this happened, her friends the methodists would, no doubt, have boasted of this as a miraculous cure, and with as much reason as the votaries of the abbé Paris did, in ascribing to his interposition, the relief received by some of his supplicants, which we see can be so easily accounted for in a natural way.

supposed *miraculés*; as, farther, I have pointed out the particular impression which was made on the minds of these persons, viz. an enthusiastic confidence in the efficacy of praying to the saint; and as, lastly, we have seen that this impression actually excited transports, ecstasies, and convulsions, which had a natural tendency to remove obstructions in the fluids, and consequently to give relief under diseases arising from this cause; from all these considerations I think we may infer unexceptionably that natural causes have been pointed out, adequate to the production of the facts which the credulous admirers of the abbé Paris ascribed to his miraculous interposition¹.

¹ I will not pretend to exclude the operation of other natural causes, besides that which I have insisted upon. In some cases, perhaps, perspirations, which might give relief, were excited merely by the great heat to which the sick persons were exposed, by being surrounded by vast crowds of spectators at the tomb, in a hot summer day. In this manner the archbishop of Sens accounts for the cure of one Mary Magdalen Massaron, a paralytic suppliant. In another case, an effort made to kneel was sufficient to cure a lameness in the knee of one M. de la Salle, who going to the tomb with his sick wife, whom the saint could not cure, returned home freed from a lameness with which he had been afflicted, in consequence of a broken thigh, which had not been well set. This was one of the most remarkable, as it is one of the best attested cures performed in St. Medard's churchyard. And M. de la Salle was so pestered with inquiries into the reality of the supposed miraculous cure, that he was glad to get a certificate from two eminent surgeons, Messrs. Petit and Pibrac, which robbed our saint of the honour of it, by observing that his lameness had been owing to this—that the fibres of the tendon formed by the re-union of the muscles after his thigh was broken had not been altogether separated, and that this separation had been effected by the effort he made to kneel at the tomb.

However, for your farther conviction, suffer me to make two or three observations, which will add strength to my conclusion, that there was nothing supernatural in the facts now before us.

First, then, it is certain, from Montgeron's book, that the cures performed in St. Medard's church-yard were not so closely connected with application to the blessed deacon, as to exclude the operation and intervention of adequate natural causes. Had our abbé's supplicants never applied to him but once, and had every one, who did apply, received benefit, the very instant of his application; this remarkable concurrence of the prayers and of the cures might perhaps have favoured the opinion that the person prayed to interposed. But the reverse of this is the case. For repeated applications to the saint were made by those whose cures are alleged as instances of his miraculous intercession; and not only days, but weeks, nay months intervened, between the first application and the relief received; which circumstances have but a very unfavourable aspect, when we compare them with the supposition that the saint contributed any thing to this relief^m.

^m Don Alphonso began his *neuvaine* to the abbé on the 25th of June, and was not cured till the 2d of July. Thibault commenced a supplicant on the 11th of July, and though she received great benefit at the tomb on the 19th, yet her legs continued swelled till the 28th. Couronneau had been a long while a patient of our saint; for so early as the 26th of March we find her at the tomb, but without success; a second experiment, in April, was equally ineffectual; and it was not till the 13th of June that she received benefit. Du Chesne began a *neuvaine* in June, without effect, and having tried another, which began on the 16th of July, was not cured till the 21st. Sergeant began his application July the 8th, and was not cured till the

If it be alleged that the cures of some of the supplicants corresponded so exactly with an application to our abbé, although not the first application, that it would be unreasonable to look about for the intervention of any natural causes: in answer to this let me observe, that though a sudden change was wrought on some of the patients, during their devotions at the tomb, yet, before there can be any reason for assigning the intercession of the abbé as the cause of this, we must be certain that no causes, naturally adequate to produce this change, intervened between the time of their being brought to the tomb, and the instant when the change was effected. But so far are we from being certain of this, that, on the contrary, I have pointed out the particular cause that did intervene, viz. violent motions communicated to their spirits and blood, by the agitations and transports to which the supplicants were wrought up by their enthusiastic devotion. However sudden the change wrought upon their health was, sufficient time was still left for the operation of this cause, which I have assigned as the cause which indeed did operate.

Another circumstance, which excludes a supernatural interposition from having any share in the cures attributed to the abbé Paris, is this, that

10th, and even not then completely, for his paralytic arm and leg did not recover their flesh till ten days after. Peter Gautier was a long time an unsuccessful patient, having tried four *neuvaines*. Louisa Coirin's cure was gradual, through the months of August and September. And lastly, Louisa Hardouin, who was cured on the 2d of August, had been directing her prayers to the abbé for some days before. All these facts are furnished us by Montgeron.

most, if not all of them, were far from being complete. This was remarkably the case of Thibault. For not to mention that her weakness, after the decrease of her dropsical swellings, was so great as to confine her to her bed, for several days, it appears also from a letter of Mr. Silva, first physician to the duke of Orleans, that after all the benefit she boasted to have received, she continued deprived of the use of two of her fingers; in which situation Mr. Silva says he could not look upon her as one that had been curedⁿ. But we have the most remarkable instance of an imperfect cure in the case of Don Alphonso. This young gentleman had lost one eye entirely, and was only threatened with the loss of the other. What then was the cure said to be wrought? Did the lost eye recover its sight? No such thing, it still remained dark, and the benefit was confined to a removal of the inflammation from the other eye. A cure left thus imperfect has but little pretension to be looked upon as miraculous; because its being so imperfect naturally points out a failure of power in the cause which brought it about.

Again; if we consider that, in some of the cases, the relief received was only temporary, this, which could not but happen if the cause I have assigned really operated, is inconsistent with the supposition

ⁿ Elle remuoit le bras, qui, selon ce qu'elle me dit, avoit été long tems sans mouvement, et elle remuoit aussi le poignet et plusieurs doigts; mais il y en avoit deux, qu'elle étoit dans l'impuissance de plier. Vous sentez, Monsieur, que les choses étant en cet état, je n'ai pu regarder Mademoiselle Thibault comme étant guérie. *No. 29 of the certificates of Thibault's cure, in Montgeron.*

that Omnipotence interposed. That there were relapses into all the former symptoms is a fact as notorious and incontestable, as it is that any relief was ever received at all, and which, were it necessary, could be confirmed by descending to particular instances^o.

The pretensions of the cures in question to be miraculous will be still farther invalidated, if we consider that the number of unsuccessful votaries to our saint vastly exceeded the number of those who received any benefit. This I mention as an indisputed fact, a fact acknowledged even by the admirers of the blessed deacon, and which, had it been attended to as it ought, would have of itself undeceived every one, as to the pretended miraculous nature of any of the cures.

That out of thousands of fanciful, enthusiastic

^o This happened in the case of Don Alphonso. The archbishop of Sens, in his *Instruction Pastorale*, produces letters and certificates from Madrid, (for which place the young man set out, soon after his cure,) in which the return of the inflammation in his eye is affirmed. One letter to this purpose from Don Francis Xavier de Ximenes, dated December the 4th, 1731, says, that the miracle was treated as a chimera at Madrid, and that the cure of the young gentleman arose partly from the medicines he had used, and partly from his having intermitted his studies, but that the cure was not lasting, the disorder returning whenever he resumed his books. But this is not all. The archbishop of Paris, in the *Ordonnance* addressed to his diocese, dated November the 8th, 1735, published a certificate signed by Don Alphonso himself on the 5th of November, 1734, in which he represents his own cure as very imperfect, and attributed what little relief he had received to a remedy which an oculist had applied to his eye three or four times, the day preceding his going to the tomb. To this the archbishop adds two other certificates, one of them signed by Don Alphonso's uncle, to the same effect.

supplicants, (and that they were thus numerous cannot be denied,) some few, by means of the agitations to which they were wrought up, should receive some benefit in certain diseases, we may account for, and I hope have accounted for, in a natural way. But if we have recourse to a miraculous interposition as the cause that acted, that far the greater number of supplicants should receive no benefit, will be a difficulty not easily to be solved. It will be natural for one to reason with himself; Why, of such multitudes, who had recourse to the abbé Paris, has God assisted so few? If, as his admirers pretend, the miracles were designed to convince the world that the abbé had died in a state of favour with God, and consequently that the appellants from the bull *Unigenitus* had been erroneously condemned, did not this reason hold good to the cure of every one who should ask it through his intercession? And did it not hold good also to the cure of all manner of diseases, even those impossible to be cured by natural means? Had any such cures been performed, that a supernatural cause interposed could not have been denied. But it is notorious that the reverse was true, so that I see not how the defenders of the miraculous nature of the facts before us can evade the force of the objections above hinted at^p.

^p Of all the supplicants to our saint, the abbé de Bescheran was perhaps the most generally taken notice of, at the time, over all Paris, as he certainly was the most constant in his devotions and agitations. This gentleman's left leg was about five or six inches shorter than his right one; and full of confidence that the blessed deacon's power could lengthen it to its proper measure, he continued his prayers at the tomb about six months. During this whole time, he had his leg measured every day, and

And now, sir, I flatter myself, that this long, prolix, though necessary examination into the facts ascribed to the supernatural interposition of the abbé Paris, has been of some weight in inducing you to admit that every thing happened in a natural way.

However, as familiar examples are more convincing than the shrewdest reasons; that the seeming insufficiency of the cause to which I have ascribed these cures may not incline you still to doubts and suspicions, it will not be foreign to my purpose, and, at the same time, it cannot but be entertaining, to mention one or two instances of cures equally extraordinary with those performed at the tomb of the blessed deacon, and which, though the means imme-

daily reports of its lengthening were propagated. But, alas ! when the tomb was shut up he was still lame, and is at present (if he be not dead within these three or four years) known at Paris by the name of the limping abbé, l'Abbé Boiteux. The abbé had made himself so well known, that the bad success of his application greatly distressed the friends of our saint; however, they were not without an answer, which they thought sufficient. They granted, indeed, what every body saw, that the abbé still continued lame; but if we would believe them, he was not so lame as he had been, for that during his six months' attendance at the tomb, the short leg had grown somewhat longer, and that it was likely it would, by degrees, have grown to the length of the other, had not the civil magistrate interrupted the operation of the miracle by walling up the tomb. In ridicule of this pretension, I have seen a whimsical calculation of the time which the abbé de Bescheran's complete cure would have taken up. Reckoning the short leg to have lengthened the twenty-fourth part of an inch in six months, if it had continued to lengthen in the same proportion, he must have persevered in leaping upon the tomb for seventy-two years before he could have obtained the whole deficiency of six inches.

diately connected with them were, to common apprehension, insufficient to bring them about, are, notwithstanding, looked upon by every body as effects that may be, nay, must be, accounted for, without calling in the agency of any supernatural power.

And first, let us consider the cures of scrofulous disorders by the royal touch. This disease is one of the most desperate that the human body is subject to, and in most, if not in all cases, eludes the power of medicine. Now that a touch, accompanied with prayers, and the hanging of a medal about the neck, should cure this disease, is as strange and unaccountable, as that prostration on the tomb of the abbé Paris should cure a paralytic or dropsical disorder. What then will you say in this case? Will you deny the facts? This cannot be done without resisting evidence far from being contemptible. The kings of England, for several hundreds of years, actually exercised their touch. Is it, therefore, to be imagined, if no cures had been observed to follow it, that an opinion of its efficacy could have been entertained for such a length of time? This you will own to be, at least, improbable. But that cures, in some cases, followed upon the touch, we have the same reasons for believing as we have for believing that it was ever put in practice; because the same writers who mention the latter, mention also the former circumstance. I should enlarge beyond all moderate bounds, were I to give quotations from our old historians in confirmation of this. It may be enough to observe, that scarcely any of them who wrote during a period of at least five hundred years, have omitted taking notice of this strange fact. Polydore Virgil, who published his History of Eng-

land in the time of Henry the VIIth, tells^q us, that in his age the kings of England continued to exert this power of healing, derived to them, as it were, by hereditary right, down from the Confessor, the first who exercised it. And though Mr. Beckett, in his Enquiry into the Antiquity and Efficacy of Touching for the Cure of the King's Evil, attempts to prove that there is no sufficient evidence for believing that the kings of England began to exercise this supposed gift so early as the reign of Edward the Confessor^r, yet is he obliged himself to own that the antiquity of this claim is very high. Particularly he admits that Edward the First, who reigned

^q Solebat Edvardus Rex, divinitus, solo tactu sanare strumosos, hoc est strumam patientes—quod quidem immortale munus jure quasi hereditario ad posteriores reges manavit; nam reges Angliæ, etiam nunc, tactu ac quibusdam hymnis, non sine ceremoniis prius recitatis, strumosos sanant. *Polydor. Virgil*, lib. viii. *Hist. Angl.*

^r William of Malmsbury, who (according to Mr. Beckett) lived about 80 years after the Confessor, is the first historian who ascribes miracles to him; and from him all our subsequent historians have derived the tradition that Edward the Confessor was the first king who touched for the scrofula. But the silence of Ingulphus, Edward's contemporary and acquaintance, and of Marianus Scotus, and Florence of Worcester, who, though not contemporaries, were, however, nearer his age than Malmsbury, shake the credit of his relation. And though Alexander the Third's bull for canonizing this king, obtained about 200 years after his death, and his life, written by Ealread, abbot of Rievaulx in Yorkshire, about the year 1164, within a century of him, mention his having performed many miracles, yet they are silent as to his being vested with a peculiar gift of curing any particular disease more than another. These are the authorities which Mr. Beckett has collected, to prove that the ceremony of touching for the cure of the king's evil cannot be traced up, as has been generally asserted, to Edward the Confessor.

above four hundred years ago, actually did touch for the king's evil, nay he owns that Petrus Blesensis, archdeacon of Bath, who wrote soon after the death of Thomas Beckett, archbishop of Canterbury, positively asserts it as a fact, that our kings have the power of curing the scrofula ; which will fix the antiquity of it at least so high as the reign of Henry the II^d, and within near a century of the Confessor. In the reign of queen Elizabeth, Tooker published his book^s on this subject ; and though I should give you a very bad opinion of my judgment, if I agreed with this author in his reasoning, yet I see no ground for refusing to admit his testimony. However wild and superstitious his notions be with regard to the cause of the cures, yet we ought not to pay less credit to his attestation of their certainty. Leaving him, therefore, with Polydore Virgil, (and indeed all our monkish historians,) to entertain himself with an opinion too absurd to be refuted seriously, that the gift of curing this disease by the touch was vested, as a privilege by Heaven, in those who had been lawfully inaugurated kings of England, I proceed to consider him as a witness of the facts which happened in his own time, of the cures of persons touched by queen Elizabeth ; and this particular takes up an entire chapter.

There he informs us, that many from all parts of

^s The title of this book is *Charisma, sive Donum Sanationis ; seu explicatio totius quæstionis de mirabilium sanitatum gratia, in qua præcipue agitur de solenni et sacra qua reges Angliæ, rite inauguri, divinitus medicati sunt, &c. &c.* by William Tooker, who, according to Antony Wood, was originally fellow of New College, and died dean of Litchfield 1620. His book bears date 1597.

England, of all ranks and degrees, were, to his own certain knowledge, cured by the touch of the queen ; that he had conversed with many of them both before and after their departure from court, observed an incredible ardour and confidence in them that the touch would cure them, and understood that they actually were cured. Some of them he met with, a considerable while after, and, upon inquiry, found that they had been perfectly free from their complaint from the time of their being touched. And, not content with these general attestations, he also descends to particular instances, mentioning the names of several persons cured, the places of their abode, and other circumstances, which leave every unprejudiced reader at a loss for reasons to refuse assent to the facts^t. What has been observed with

^t *Permuli salutem consequuti sunt, quos omnes enumerare necessarium haud esset mihi brevitatem consectanti ; honorarium fortassis esset, et scribendi multi essent commentarii. Ex diversis regni provinciis confluxere, ut requirerent morbi medellam, ex familiis nobilium, ingenuorum, tenuiorum oriundi, omnis aetatis, sexus, ordinis, pro salute supplices facti, ex agris ac pagis, ex municipiis, ex hac urbe Londino nullis laboribus, sumpibusve pepercerunt ut coram ejus majestate se sisterent. Quot ego vidi, audivique e borealibus partibus, et agro Eboraceno, e locis maritimis, ex australi, occidentali, orientalique parte regionis hujus insulæ frequentes accurrisse, ex ambabus Academis, et celebrioribus regni provinciis omnibus convenisse, quibuscum ego nonnullis libenter studioseque contuleram, ante et post discessionem ex curia? Reperi autem incredibilem ardorem, fidem adipiscendæ sanitatis, et reapse salutem comparatam beneficio regio intellexi ; quosdam iterum postea offenderam ; interroganti an morbus recurreret ingenue fassi sunt mihi se perdiu sanissimos esse ex illo tempore, liberatosque penitus ab incommoditate morbida. In mea patria, civitate Exonia, neminem latere possunt, qui hodie visuntur ab omnibus, Joannes Capellus hones-*

regard to Mr. Tooker may be applied to Mr. Wiseman. For though his reasoning, with regard to the cause of the cures of persons touched by our kings be equally superstitious with that of Tooker, his attestation as to their certainty is unexceptionable. His office of principal surgeon in king Charles the First's army, and of serjeant-surgeon to king Charles the Second, after the restoration, gave him the best opportunities of information, and his skill in his profession made him less liable to imposition. What then does he say? “I myself” (these are his words) “have been a frequent eyewitness of many hundreds “of cures performed by his majesty's touch alone, “without any assistance of chirurgery; and those, “many of them, such as had tired out the endea-“vours of able chirurgeons before they came thither. “It were endless to recite what I myself have seen, “and what I have received acknowledgments of by “letter, not only from the several parts of this na-“tion, but also from Ireland, Scotland, Jersey, and “Guernsey^u,” &c.

But not to dwell on evidence which, perhaps, may be looked upon as antiquated, if we come down to our own times, we shall find instances of these cures attested in the strongest manner. I myself have

ti civis filius, et Appilini filia, uterque sanati ab hac struma. Norunt omnes in oppido Molton meridiem versus Archidiaconatus Barum, concivem suum Joannem Sherlandium qui hodie vi-
vit et valet, et palam profitetur, honoris ergo et grati animi offi-
cio semper devinctus, se nullum levamentum invenisse aliud
quam sacratissimarum manuum regiae majestatis tactum, unde
sibi, desperatione fracto, salus obtigerat. Norim ego quandam ex
familia antiqua Turbervillorum fœminam, quæ jam totum decen-
nium curata perstitit ex illo morbo. *Tooker*, cap. viii. p. 103, &c.

^u See Wiseman's Chirurgical Treatises, vol. i. p. 387.

met with a man, who assured me, that queen Anne's touch, and the medal which she hung about his neck, (and which I saw about it above twenty years after,) had cured him, when in a most desperate way. But as a single unnamed witness will perhaps meet with little credit, what will you say, when I name one whose attestation must be owned to be free from every suspicion? I have in my eye the late Mr. Dicken, serjeant-surgeon to queen Anne, a gentleman well known for eminence in his profession. That he had opportunities of knowing the truth must be allowed, for all who were to be touched were first examined by him before they were brought to her majesty; and he made no secret in bearing witness to the certainty of some of the cures. This attestation of his must be consistent with the knowledge of many still alive, and I relate it to you on the authority of a physician of the strictest honour and probity, who assures me that Mr. Dicken has declared to him, that he had in his possession great numbers of letters written to him by persons of character and distinction, from most parts of England, attesting the recovery of their relations, acquaintances, and servants, who had come up to London to be touched, and thanking him for the trouble he had taken; that he himself could, from his own knowledge, affirm, that several who were touched received benefit, and, in particular, he related one case which I shall here mention. A woman came to him, begging that he would present her to be touched by the queen. As from her appearance he had no great opinion of her character, he told her the touch would be of little service to her, as he supposed she would sell her medal, which must continue about the neck

to make the cure lasting. She promised to preserve it; was touched; had the medal given to her; and soon after, her sores healed up. Forgetting her promise, and now looking upon the piece of gold as useless, she disposed of it; but soon after, her sores broke out once more. Upon this she applied to Mr. Dicken a second time, earnestly entreating him to present her again to the queen. He did so, and once more she was cured.

Here then we have instances of one of the most inveterate diseases being cured, without the application and use of any known adequate means; in consequence of the patients being touched, and having a bit of gold hung about the neck, with prayers suitable to the occasion; which means could have no natural efficacy to produce the cure. Shall we then say that the kings of England have had any supernatural gift conferred on them, and that the cures of persons touched by them were so many miracles? This solution might perhaps pass current in the age of Polydore Virgil, in that of Mr. Tooker, or in that of Mr. Wiseman; but one who would account for them so at this time of day would be exposed, and deservedly too, to universal ridicule^x. How

^x This, in fact, has been the fate of a late writer of the English history, who seems to differ from Mr. Tooker only in this particular, that whereas the latter is of opinion that the kings of England had this gift of healing conferred on them in consequence of their inauguration, (neque tam ingenita vi aliqua a majoribus suis cum natura seminum et similitudine corporum ac imitatione morum propagata, adnituntur id negotii, quam singuliari munere divino, quod inauguratis potius contingit, suffulti operantur sanitatem, are Tooker's words, p. 85.) our modern champion of hereditary right maintains that inauguration is not necessary in order to be vested with this gift; and in confirma-

then do we account for them? Very easily, we think, in a mere natural way. We say, as it never was pretended that the royal touch was beneficial in every instance when tried, that in those instances when benefit was received, the concurrence of the cure with the touch might have been quite accidental, while adequate causes operated and brought about the effect; that perhaps the diseases might have been in a healing way, and that at the time of being touched either the strength of the patient's constitution had brought his disorder to a favourable crisis, or that a change of air or exercise, or a new regimen, and other similar causes, had begun the cure. Or if any of the cases be attended by such circumstances as prevent our attributing any thing to the above-mentioned causes, still we think that we need not call in a supernatural cause; for that the ceremony of being touched might be the occasion of making such causes act, as would convey benefit to some of the patients in a way entirely natural. In a word, we have recourse to the power of impressions made on the mind, and to the amazing effects which experience satisfies us they have upon the habit of the body, and say that the person touched, having his imagination heated with the religious solemnity of the ceremony, the dignity of the toucher, and other striking circumstances, these might fix a deep impression on his mind, an impression continued by the wearing of the medal, and which, in some cases, might be a means of restoring

tion of this opinion relates a story (a disputed one by the by) of a cure performed by the touch of the Pretender, who had never been inaugurated. See Carte's famous note, in his first volume of the History of England.

health y. Some one or other of these natural causes we assign as sufficient to account for the cures of

I shall greatly confirm what I have here asserted, by quoting the opinion of an ingenious surgeon, Mr. Beckett, who, in his Enquiry into the Efficacy of Touching for the King's Evil, already mentioned, ascribes the cures in question to the impressions made on the minds of the patients by their confidence of receiving relief; and that this cause could have this efficacy he proves as follows: "Most certain it is, in the disease I am speaking of, the blood abounds with a viscous juice, and moves slowly; it wants that brisk intestine agitation of its particles, that it ought to have as a warm fluid, and such as it enjoys in a sound and hale constitution; from whence obstructions in the glands, and other evils are wont to arise. But when the imagination becomes fired with the hopes of a succeeding cure, the whole mass of blood becomes, as it were, irradiated by the spirits contained in it; by which means those corpuscles which make that fluid viscous, or ropy, or dispirited, become easily disengaged from the other principles it was before blended with; and the whole mass being put into a more brisk and kindly agitation, may force open the obstructed canals, help it to throw off the heterogeneous particles, and dispose it to permeate, as freely as it ought, those vessels that constitute the glands, which would scarcely before, or but very sparingly, admit of it."

I know no objection that can be made to this method of accounting for the cures of persons touched for the king's evil, but this, that children have been cured by the touch, in whom such an imagination could not be supposed to be serviceable. This hath been particularly insisted upon by Dr. Heylin, who says he has seen great numbers of them healed. But Mr. Beckett well observes, that the doctor must be understood to mean, only that he has seen them touched; for when he speaks of such numbers, nobody can suppose that he gave himself the trouble of going so many miles, and so many ways, as he must probably have done, to inquire into the event. And this observation is confirmed by the following instance, which shews that the words *touching* and *healing* were at that time synonymous terms.

Dr.

the king's evil by the touch ; and the last mentioned of them, in particular, I have insisted upon as sufficient to account for the cures ascribed to the intercession of the abbé Paris. The two cases are parallel, except that a variety of diseases were cured at the tomb of our saint, whereas the touch of our kings was never thought sanative but of one : a disease, however, of a more obstinate nature, perhaps, than any cured in St. Medard's churchyard.

But besides the cures of scrofulous disorders by the royal touch, we are able to produce instances of a great variety of diseases of the most inveterate kind, the cures of which, though closely connected with the use of means seemingly inadequate, are not, however, ascribed, by any one, to a supernatural interposition.

I have in my eye the famous cures performed by Greatrakes, a gentleman of some fashion in the county of Waterford in Ireland, by the stroking of his hand. This person, according to his own account of himself, began, in 1662, to have a strange persuasion in his mind, (of which he was not able to give a rational account to others,) that the gift of curing the king's evil was bestowed upon him ; and, upon trial, he found his stroking succeed. After this, he ventured upon agues, and, in time, attempted all diseases whatever. His fame having spread throughout Ireland, at the request of the earl of

Dr. Carr, in his Medicinal Epistles, mentions that king Charles the Second, in such a certain space of time, healed 92,107 ; which is the exact number of persons he touched in those years, as appears by the register preserved by the keeper of his majesty's closet, belonging to his majesty's chapel.

Orrery he came over to England in January 1666, to attempt the cure of lady Conway, who was troubled with an obstinate headache. He continued at Ragley, lord Conway's seat in Warwickshire, about three weeks or a month, but could not, with all his skill, cure the lady. However, during his continuance at that place, great numbers all round the country flocked to him, many of whom were cured, while others received no benefit. From Ragley he removed to Worcester, where his success was so great, that his fame having reached London, he received an order from lord Arlington, secretary of state, to come up to town. On his arrival, he took a house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and during a residence of many months there, very remarkable cures were performed; an account of^z which, as also of himself, in answer to some calumnies of his enemies, Greatrakes published before he left London; and the cures therein related seem to have all the circumstances necessary in order to establish the credit of any matters of fact. The names of those who were cured, their diseases, the time when, the places where, and the witnesses before whom the cures were performed; all these marks of a genuine narrative are to be met with in this book, which was, besides, published on the spot, when the facts in question lay exposed to every one's inquiry; so that had there been any fraud, it must have been

^z The title of this performance is as follows: A brief account of Mr. Valentine Greatrakes, and divers of the strange cures lately by him performed; written by himself, in a letter addressed to the hon. Robert Boyle, esq. whereunto are annexed the testimonials of several eminent and worthy persons of the chief matters of fact there related. London, 1666.

discovered. But, indeed, no such thing was or could be affirmed. The witnesses, many of them at least, are persons of such unexceptionable credit, good sense, and learning, that, as we cannot suspect they were imposed upon, so we cannot suspect they would impose. Besides the certificates of many gentlemen of distinction^a, we have also the attestations of grave divines^b, and eminent physicians^c, which last are not very ready in admitting that cures may be effected, without making use of the medicines which they themselves prescribe.

Here, then, let me ask, can any means be supposed more inadequate, to all appearance, to effect cures of diseases, than those made use of by Greatrakes? And yet nothing can be more certain, than that there was no supernatural interposition in the case. The cures were effected gradually, and the operation of the hand was frequently repeated; in many cases there was occasion to make use of razors and other sharp instruments, to lay open the sores; the number of those who received no benefit from him, after repeated trials, greatly exceeded the number of those who were relieved; add to this, that very many who received benefit, received no cure, but soon relapsed into all their former symptoms. These and other circumstances, which can be col-

^a The hon. Robert Boyle, sir Nathaniel Holbatch, sir John Godolphin, sir Abraham Cullen, sir Charles Doe's son, colonel Weldon, alderman Knight, &c.

^b Dr. Rust, dean of Connor, afterwards bishop of Dromore; Dr. Cudworth, attesting the cure of his own son; Dr. Whichcote, attesting his own cure; Dr. Wilkins, afterwards bishop of Chester; Mr. Patrick, afterwards bishop; Dr. George Evans, &c.

^c Sir William Smith, Dr. Denton, Dr. Fairclough, Dr. Jeremiah Astel, and others.

lected from his own account^d, satisfy us that Greatrakes was no worker of miracles. But whether

^d Greatrakes's book being now in a very few hands, I shall, for the satisfaction of the reader, transcribe one or two certificates, that he may see what diseases were cured, and the manner of their cure. The following, then, is the certificate signed by dean Rust: "Being desired to give my testimony of Mr. Greatrakes and his cures, I do hereby certify that I have, with some curiosity, been an observer of him and of his operations: and I take him to be a person of an honest and upright mind, a free and open spirit, a cheerful and agreeable humour, an inoffensive conversation, of large and generous principles, and that carries on no design of faction and interest. I have been an eyewitness of many hundreds that have come under his hands, especially during his stay at lord Conway's for three weeks or a month together, and I must profess myself convinced (however it be from an immediate gift, or a peculiarity of complexion) that he has a virtue more than ordinary. For though I have seen him touch many, with little or no success, yet it must not be denied that I have seen too, in very many instances, by his spittle, and the touch or stroke of his hand, humours put into odd and violent fermentations, pains strangely fly before him, till he has chased them out at some of the extreme parts of the body; the king's evil in a few days wonderfully dried up; knobs or kernels brought to a suppuration; humours ripened; ulcerous sores skinned and amended; hard swellings in women's breasts abated; cold and senseless limbs restored to their heat and life; scabs all over the body, which have been for many years, and counted incurable, deadened and dried up; many people relieved in cases of deafness, lameness, dimness of sight; twenty several persons, in fits of the falling sickness, or convulsions, or hysterical passions, (for I am not wise enough to distinguish them,) upon laying his hands upon their breasts, (often upon the top of their clothes,) within a few minutes brought to their senses so as to be able to tell where their pain lay, which he has followed till he pursued it out of the body. I can say little to the permanency of his cures; many, I do believe, continue firm, but several of those of the

the concurrence of Greatrakes's stroking with some cures was only merely accidental, while other ade-

“ falling sickness I heard had relapsed before I left the country,
 “ but after much longer intervals than they were wont to enjoy.
 “ The forms of words he used are, ‘ God Almighty heal thee for
 “ his mercy’s sake :’ and if they profess to receive any benefit, he
 “ bids them give God the praise, and that (so far as I can judge)
 “ with a sincere devotion. This is, in short, the matter of fact,
 “ which is testified to be true by me,

“ GEORGE RUST, D. D. and Dean of Connor.”

I shall add a letter from the son of sir Charles Doe, to Dr. Fairclough, relating his own case.

“ SIR,

“ Whereas you desire to know what effect Mr. Greatrakes’s
 “ hand had upon me, this may satisfy you, that the headache,
 “ which I laboured under three or four years, (and used what
 “ means the physicians prescribed, though unsuccessfully,)
 “ which ofttimes was very violent, was cured by the laying
 “ on Mr. Greatrakes’s hand in the following manner. About
 “ the beginning of March last, hearing that Mr. Greatrakes
 “ was at my lord mayor’s house, I repaired thither unto him,
 “ and desired him (having the headache then violently on me)
 “ that he would be pleased to use his endeavours to cure me ;
 “ whereupon he demanded in what part of my head the pain
 “ lay, which I shewed him, and thereupon he laid his hand
 “ upon the place affected, and immediately I found the pain
 “ removed to another place in my head, which I also directed
 “ him to, who pursued it till it went out of my head, and so
 “ following it from place to place, (laying his hand upon that
 “ part of my body whither it did remove,) till he drove it into
 “ my foot, where it was very painful to me, till at length he
 “ chased it out at my toe, I not putting off my stocking : which
 “ he did at two different times, the pain, as I conceived, being
 “ divided ; whereupon I forthwith found myself freed from all
 “ manner of pain, both in head and body, and have so continu-
 “ ed ever since (blessed be God) in perfect health. And not
 “ only was I freed from the aforesaid pain of the head, but also
 “ from a constant bleeding that continually attended it, whereas
 “ I did use to bleed every day, (or every other day at least,) ”

quate causes operated ; or whether impressions made on the minds of the persons stroked might not in some cases procure relief, I shall not take upon me to determine ; but only observe, that though the means immediately connected with the cures were, to all appearance, as inadequate as any that can be supposed, yet there can be no pretence for having recourse to supernatural causes to account for them ; since, for aught we know, such means may have some hidden efficacy, or else, if they have no such efficacy, they may prove the occasion of exciting causes known to be adequate to act.

Upon the whole, then, the mighty wonders boasted of by the admirers of the abbé Paris lose their gigantic appearance when examined closely ; and I cannot help flattering myself that enough has been said to convince even you, that the cures performed in St. Medard's churchyard have no more pretensions to be esteemed miraculous, than have the cures of those touched by our kings, or of those stroked by Greatrakes.

But I had almost forgot, that, in support of the blessed deacon's miraculous power, besides the cures, Montgeron instances other facts, and particularly insists upon his own conversion as a proof of it. That it may not, therefore, be said that I have neglected any thing in the examination, I shall now relate this fact as it really happened, and, from Montgeron's own account of it, you will perceive that he had not any reasonable grounds for looking upon his own

“ which bleeding I am very little troubled with. This is that,
“ sir, which I affirm to be true, who am yours, &c. &c.

“ JOHN DOE.”

conversion as a miracle wrought by the intercession of the abbé Paris.

On the 7th of September, 1731, Montgeron, being at this time, as he tells us himself, both an infidel in principle and a libertine in practice, repaired to St. Medard's churchyard, not out of devotion, but with a design to examine narrowly the cases of those who should come to ask their cure. Scarcely had he entered the churchyard, when he was struck with awe and reverence, having never before heard prayers pronounced with so much ardour and transport as he observed amongst the supplicants at the tomb. Upon this, throwing himself upon his knees, resting his elbows on the tombstone, and covering his face with his hands, he spake the following prayer : “ O “ thou ! by whose intercession so many miracles are “ said to be performed ; if it be true, that a part of “ thee survives the grave, and that thou hast influ- “ ence with the Almighty, have pity on the dark- “ ness of my understanding, and through his mercy “ obtain the removal of it.” Having prayed thus, many thoughts, as he says, began to open themselves to his mind, and so profound was his attention, that he continued on his knees four hours, not in the least disturbed by the vast crowd of surrounding supplicants. During this time, all the arguments, which he ever heard or read in favour of Christianity, occurred to him with so much force, and seemed so strong and convincing, that he went home fully satisfied of the truth of religion in general, and of the holiness and power of that person, who, as he supposed, had engaged the divine goodness to enlighten his understanding so suddenly.

This is a fair representation of Montgeron's conversion, as related by himself, which, for the following reasons, I think to have less pretensions than any of the cures have, to be looked upon as the effect of a supernatural interposition.

I would ask, therefore, what certainty could Montgeron have, or how could he satisfy others, that those thoughts and reflections, which determined him to be a believer, were excited by the abbé Paris? How could he discover that they were impressed on his mind from above, and were not the suggestions of his own fancy? And how shall we be able to satisfy ourselves, that the sudden change of his principles was really owing to the cause he assigns? That there was nothing supernatural in the case, and that our convert was more indebted to the warmth of his own temper than to the intercession of our abbé, we shall have grounds for concluding, if we take a view of his character, as we are enabled to draw it from his own history of himself.

However odd it may seem, experience must satisfy us that a sudden transition from the extravagancies of irreligion and libertinism to those of devotion, is no uncommon appearance in life; and that many who have set out at first avowed scoffers at religion, have, in the end, run so far into the other extreme, as to be lost in all the wilds of enthusiasm, the seeds of which have been in their minds from the beginning. Strong passions, and a lively imagination, which often exclude all solidity of judgment, are ingredients which must concur in forming the visionary devotee. These ingredients may have at first proved the causes of a man's irreligion, and of his abandoning himself to the greatest irre-

gularities in practice; and these very ingredients will be able to bring him back, and lead him as far one way as they had done the other. It being impossible for a man totally to banish all apprehensions of an omnipotent Being, and future life, the infidel of a warm and fanciful turn of mind will often be deeply affected, and the terrors of divine vengeance, working on his pliable imagination, may sometimes be so effectual as to give his affections and inclinations a new bias, and make religion occupy the place of his lusts. Now, that Montgeron was a person of this visionary and fanciful character, he himself satisfies us from the facts he relates. At the age of one and twenty, before which time he had begun to indulge his passions without measure, having disguised himself in women's apparel, in order to get himself admitted into a convent, to perfect an intrigue begun with one of the nuns, and being on his way thither in a chaise, the horses, on some fright, overturned it, and he escaped much bruised, and with a broken arm. Looking upon this as a judgment from Heaven, he laid aside, not only his design of getting admittance into the nunnery, but also his profligate way of life, and put himself into the hands of a priest of the Oratory, who made him, as he tells us, read many good books. Soon after this, he was so warm in his fit of devotion, that he shut himself up in the abbey of La Trappe, the monks of which order are remarkable for the severity of their discipline. Having continued in this retreat about a month, a dangerous fit of sickness obliged him to leave it, and, upon his recovery, his passions hurried him once more into all the excesses of criminal pleasure, and

from wishing that religion might not prove true, he, in a manner, persuaded himself that it was all a cheat. Yet, amidst his irregularities, he was not easy in his mind. He had only endeavoured to make himself an infidel, but, in spite of himself, he was far from being riveted in these principles ; and the reports of the miracles performed at our abbé's tomb being the general conversation about town, he became greatly disturbed in his mind : because miracles, as he observes, could not agree with his system of infidelity. In this state of perplexity, he took a resolution to examine the truth of the facts reported, and accordingly repaired to our abbé's tomb on the day already mentioned, and what happened at that visit has been related. Now that the fervour and vehemence of devotion, which he saw among the supplicants, should excite in him a serious frame of mind, is extremely natural, without supposing that the intercession of the abbé contributed any thing towards it. How easily he could pass from the libertine to the saint, he had already shewn us, in shutting himself up with the monks of La Trappe. The company of enthusiasts is infectious ; and it is no greater wonder that one who had all the seeds of an enthusiastic devotion in his breast, should have them called out on this occasion, than that combustible matter should take fire when touched by a flame. That he did not cool again, as he had done once before, can be easily accounted for. When he shut himself up with the monks of La Trappe he was young, and his appetite for sensual gratifications strong and unsatisfied ; no wonder, therefore, his fit of sanctity should leave him at that time. But now, when the flame of devotion was re-

kindled at the tomb of the abbé Paris, he was in the decline of life, his taste for sensual pleasures palled by long use, and his appetites jaded by indulgence. Temptations to his former vices, therefore, were less apt to entice him ; and that from this period he continued a zealous devotee, is perfectly consistent with the warmth and liveliness of his passions, which only changed their object from matters of sense to those of a spiritual kind, and found the same gratification in the latter which they had done in the former. In a word, Montgeron had no greater reason to look upon his conversion as miraculous, than our methodists have, who talk in the same strain ; who can tell you the exact hour, nay moment, when the Holy Spirit began to act upon their minds ; who, if you will believe them, have their conversations with God, which they pretend to be able to distinguish from the rovings of their own fancies ; dignifying the ridiculous sallies of their disordered imaginations with the awful name of supernatural impulses. I shall only add, that the extravagancies into which Montgeron ran, after his conversion, some of which you will find in the note^e,

^e Monsieur de Montgeron, being a counsellor of the parliament at Paris, was involved in a quarrel which that body had with the court in the year 1732, and, amongst others, banished to Auvergne. During his exile, which had only heightened his zeal for Jansenism, he conceived a design (the thought of which he seems to ascribe to a divine impulse) of collecting the proofs and attestations of the miracles of the favourite saint of his party. Full of enthusiasm, he devoted himself as a martyr to Jansenism ; and as he knew what dangers he exposed himself to by this attempt, that he might prepare himself for suffering, besides his fastings, penances, and other severities, he drew up a form of prayer, (a copy of which he gives us in his

give us a farther view of his character, and add strength to our conclusion, that one of so visionary a temper might be converted in the manner he was, without supposing any thing supernatural in the case.

Let then the sceptical author of the *Essay on book,*) which he distributed among his sect, to be made use of for him. On his being permitted to return to Paris, he set about his work, and used uncommon diligence in collecting the letters, depositions, and certificates of the witnesses of the supposed miracles ; the originals of which papers he took care to deposit with public notaries for every one's satisfaction ; and he collected so many, that he ascribes this to the immediate care of Heaven, favouring and protecting his work. From these papers he compiled his narrative of the cures, inserting also the certificates above-mentioned. The archbishop of Sens's *Pastoral Instructions* being the capital performance against our abbé's miracles, Montgeron entitled his book, *An Answer to the Archbi- shop.* The book being at last printed in a pompous quarto, and dedicated to the king, he prepared himself to present it into his majesty's own hand. For eight days he lay on a bed of ashes, bread and water was his only sustenance, and the whole period was spent in devotion. On the 27th of July, 1737, having assembled his family, acquainted them with his design, and recommended himself to their prayers, he set out for Versailles, and on the 29th he got an opportunity of presenting his book into his majesty's own hands, to whom he at the same time made a speech. The king, little versed in such matters, heard him with patience, and received his book in the most gracious manner ; but was not a little surprised when, soon after Montgeron was gone, the cardinal de Fleuri, being informed of the af- fair, told him that the author of the book must be imprisoned. Montgeron, being prepared for suffering, nay even courting it, did not abscond ; but, after presenting copies of his book to the duke of Orleans, the first president of the parliament, and the chief magistrates at Paris, retired to his house, and waited with a kind of impatience till a letter de cachet came next morning, in consequence of which he was carried to prison, from which he never got out.

Miracles make the most he can of the facts attributed to the abbé Paris, what will this avail him? From what I have submitted to your consideration, it appears, that though we admit the facts, we have it in our power to deny the consequences; though we grant that some of the cures happened, yet are we able to give sufficient reasons for rejecting the claim of the Jansenists to have their saint looked upon as a worker of miracles. This, I say, we have it in our power to do. I wish, for the conviction of you and of your friends, it had been more frequently done. For I cannot but observe, that some of our defenders of Christianity have not taken a very likely method to evade the force of the argument, drawn from the pretended miracles of the abbé, in prejudice of the miracles of the gospel. The most common way has been to deny the facts in general, as the production of fraud and imposture. And yet, who-ever attentively weighs the evidence urged in support of some of them, must own that few matters of fact ever were confirmed by more unexceptionable testimony. They were performed openly, in the sight of the whole world; in the heart of one of the greatest cities in the universe; on persons whom every body could see and examine; whose diseases could not be counterfeit, because we have the certificates of the most eminent physicians, who had previously attended or examined them; and whose recovery every inhabitant of the city of Paris could satisfy himself of, because they lived on the spot. And that the facts were^f examined into with all the

^f I cannot, therefore, avoid dissenting from the learned Dr. Dodwell, who, in his Free Answer to the Free Inquiry, (p. 132,) tells us, as the reason why we must reject the facts ascribed to

art and address of the ruling part of the clergy, backed by the civil magistrate, is too notorious to

the abbé Paris, “ that they were not offered to public examination. Their enemies,” says he, “ durst not attempt a free inquiry like the doctor’s, lest it should have ended in a reflection on their own cause. The court, which was no doubt satisfied of the fraud, chose rather to proceed by way of authority than of argument, lest that method should be carried too far, and a little public examination might be demanded of those miracles which were wrought in favour of received doctrines.” Now I much fear this reason of the doctor will not hold. For certainly, if ever facts were freely inquired into, the cures performed in St. Medard’s churchyard were so. That many free inquiries were made into them, the Pastoral Letters of the archbishops of Paris, of Embrun, of Sens, of many bishops, an inundation of pamphlets of private ecclesiastics, and the repeated controversies in the *Journaux de Trevoux*, and other periodical papers, sufficiently prove. Nor is it less certain, that if recourse was had by the court to authority, it was only because argument had been tried, and found ineffectual. Nor is the doctor’s reason, why the enemies of the abbé Paris durst not attempt a free inquiry, (viz. lest this should be carried so far as to affect the credit of the miracles wrought in favour of received doctrines,) such as will stand examination. For who were the enemies of the abbé Paris’s miracles? Those very persons who, by having power in their hands, could, as they pleased, stop any disagreeable inquiry: and by having the prejudices of the people in favour of the miracles admitted by themselves, could have no reason to fear any detection of these, which were admitted also by the Jansenists, who contended for our abbé’s miracles: so that the detection of these could never endanger the credit of those admitted by both sides. Besides, as the enemies of the abbé Paris appealed to no new miracles in favour of received doctrines, the miracles they admitted could not be disproved by any new evidence. Add to all this, that the interest of the opposers of the miracles of our abbé, so clearly pointed out the expediency of detecting them, that it is not to be supposed they should discourage a free inquiry into them, merely because of a remote, possible consequence; be-

admit of a dispute; as it is also, that some of them could stand the examination, and remain undetected. So that to reject and disbelieve all the cures, in general, as the offspring of fraud, must necessarily give the advocates of infidelity great advantage, and leave the Christian in the labyrinth prepared for him, by puzzling him to assign reasons why he believes the miracles of our Saviour, while he rejects those ascribed to the saint of Jansenism.

Others again, finding, upon an examination of the evidence, that the certainty of some of the cures performed in St. Medard's churchyard could not be doubted of, have admitted that they did happen, but have accounted for them by ascribing them to the Devil. A solution this, that can serve only to throw confusion and uncertainty on the point controverted.

But the method which I thought myself obliged to follow^g leaves nothing to be objected, places the

cause, perhaps, a like public examination might be demanded of those miracles, which were wrought in favour of received doctrines. These are my reasons for differing from the opinion of a gentleman whose labours have done so much honour to himself, and so much service to the religion he professes. And I am confident that his candour will excuse these remarks, which I should not have made, had not I been obliged, by my argument, to assign a reason for rejecting the miraculous interposition of the abbé Paris, entirely different from that mentioned by him.

^g Before my first edition of this work in 1754, M. des Vœux had published his book, in which, as I learn from Dr. Middleton, he accounts for the cures, said to be performed on the supplicants of our abbé, in the manner I have attempted. As the materials in my possession on this subject are very complete, my not having perused M. des Vœux's work seems to be of little or no consequence.

merits of the controversy in the clearest light, and must for ever silence those who would set up the cures performed in St. Medard's churchyard in opposition to the gospel miracles, which, as we shall see afterwards, are not liable to the same objections, because in them a supernatural interposition will be shewn to be clear and indisputable. Before we proceed to the proof of this, however, it may not be improper to take notice of a few other noted pretensions to miracles, which fall to the ground in consequence of the reasoning which has overturned those ascribed to the blessed deacon.

And this, in particular, is the case of the miracles pretended to here in England, about forty or fifty years ago, by those wild enthusiasts the French prophets. They were all cures of diseases, all performed on persons whose minds, heated with enthusiastic transport, were in an apt disposition to excite such a ferment in the body, as might in some cases not only change the state of the fluids, but also brace the relaxed solids. Of all the strange facts ascribed to these prophets, the cure of sir Richard Bulkeley of a rupture seems the most proper to be singled out as an instance. That the cure really was performed, without the application of any new remedy, and in consequence of prayer and the word spoken by the prophet, was not disproved at the time, and was, soon after, seriously affirmed by sir Richard himself, with all its circumstances, to a gentleman still alive, from whom I have my information. But though we may admit the fact, we deny the miracle. Remember the instance, quoted from Pechlin, of the cure of the Hamburg physician's rupture, by the shock of a piece of bad news, and we

shall not be at a loss to point out a natural cause for the cure received by sir Richard^h. That the cures attributed to these enthusiasts are to be accounted for in this manner, is evident from the bad success they had when they pretended to perform what was indisputably supernatural. The resurrection of Dr. Eames is a well known story. On this event they foolishly (for all enthusiasts must ever expose themselves) rested the credit of their party; and this failing, we are unavoidably led to account for any success they had in inferior instances, on principles that exclude all supernatural interposition.

Again; if the reasoning concerning the cures performed in St. Medard's churchyard be of any weight, it will also overturn the pretensions of the famous cure of madame de la Fosse to be a miracle. This story, having made full as much noise at Paris as did the cures at our abbé's tomb, very well deserves our notice here.

Anne Charlier, wife of Francis de la Fosse, a cabinet maker, forty-five years old, had for twenty years been afflicted at different times with an issue of blood, which for the last seven years had given

^h Sir Richard's name was famous, not only for his being cured in this manner, but also for his having drawn his pen in defence of the prophecies of his sect; and for his attempting to obviate the objections which their agitations while they uttered them, and the failure of completion at the time marked, had justly given rise to, by comparing the conduct of his prophets with that of the prophets mentioned in the Old Testament. The reader may see, amongst the tracts of bishop Hoadley, an excellent and masterly answer to sir Richard's ingenious apology, which is, if I remember right, taken notice of by lord Shaftsbury in his Letter on Enthusiasm.

her very few intervals of ease. It being the custom of the parish where she dweltⁱ, to have an annual procession on Corpus Christi day, through the extent of the parish to the church, madame de la Fosse, on the 25th of May, 1725, took a resolution to get herself carried down to the street on the approaching festival, (which was to be on the 31st,) and, as the procession passed by, to ask her cure by prayer to our Saviour, supposed to be present in the host. She had thought of this the year before, but by the persuasion of her confessor did not then execute her resolution. However, she was determined to try it now, having her mind fully prepossessed with an opinion that she should by these means recover her health. On the 28th she was carried to church, and received the sacrament; and the 31st, Corpus Christi day, being come, she was carried down stairs, being unable to walk, and was seated in the street in a chair, that she might be ready when the procession passed by. On its arrival she attempted to kneel, but, through weakness, fell from her chair on the pavement. Raising herself on her hands and knees, she followed the procession, crawling thus on the ground, and crying out, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst heal me;” some thinking her mad, others looking upon her to be drunk, while many pitied her. Having crawled about thirty yards, and finding herself left behind, she endeavoured to rise. At first, she raised herself upon her knees, and then, with help, got upon her feet, all trembling and giddy. And now she cried out again with greater transport, repeating

ⁱ The parish of St. Margaret, in the Faubourg St. Antoine at Paris.

still the same words. Soon after, she perceived that her heart was fortified, that a glowing heat warmed all her limbs, and that her legs were able to support her. For some steps she leaned on those who had lifted her up; but at last, finding herself strong enough to walk without help, she followed the procession till it came to the church, which was above a mile from her house; and having, by her earnest importunity, got a place near to the host, she entered the church with it; and from that time she was sensible her complaint had entirely left her.

I have related the circumstances of this fact, as I find them in a pamphlet which appeared soon after. Were we to admit that this cure was really performed in the manner just represented, and that the evidence^k excludes all suspicion of fraud and collusion, yet that there was any thing in it miraculous may very reasonably be suspected. The same cause which could give relief to the supplicants in St. Medard's churchyard, will account for the benefit received by madame de la Fosse. From the printed account of her story, she appears to be a person of a warm, fanciful temper; that she had wrought

^k The cardinal de Noailles, who was then archbishop of Paris, having heard the reports of this cure, ordered a verbal process to be taken concerning it, before his commissaries. And the whole transaction being established on the evidence of a great number of witnesses, he published it as a miracle, commanding a solemn thanksgiving and Te Deum to be sung in all the churches of Paris. Madame de la Fosse lived for several years after, was visited by persons of the highest rank, and even taken notice of by the king and queen, who saw her at Versailles. However, though she was greatly relieved, her cure was not absolutely complete. See Beausobre's remarks on it, in the Bibliothèque Germanique.

self up to a firm persuasion that she should be cured by praying to the host; and that her prayers actually excited in her such transports and emotions, as could resemble the phrensy of the lunatic, or the wildness of the drunkard. And when we know that these circumstances attended her cure, need we be surprised that her relaxed blood-vessels should contract, and be restored to their proper tone? If the accelerated motions communicated to the nervous system by a surprise, could cure the physician of Hamburgh of a rupture, or, excited by joy, could remove the palsy of Pieresque, what reason can there be for doubting that those excited in madame de la Fosse, by her warmth of devotion, might cure her of an issue of blood?

I should run into an endless enumeration of particulars, were I to take notice of all the instances of cures ascribed to a miraculous interposition, which, upon an exact examination, will sink down within the limits of nature, and may be accounted for, either by the same cause which brought about the cures in St. Medard's churchyard, or else by supposing that the usual remedies applied by the physician, or the strength of the patient's constitution, and other adequate causes, operated, whilst the honour of the cure is attributed to some saint who happened to be invoked. Ninety-nine miracles in a hundred of those pretended to in latter times, by the papists, are cures of diseases; and I defy their advocates to produce any of them more extraordinary than the cures of the abbé Paris's supplicants, or that of madame de la Fosse. Yet we see that even these have been accounted for in a mere natural way; much more, therefore, those cures which had no

such sudden operation, and with regard to which we have no grounds for excluding the efficacy of the usually prescribed remedies. Indeed a man of sense cannot avoid wondering at the extravagant length to which some people can extend their faith, when he observes so many cures attributed, by the superstitious amongst the Roman catholics, to the miraculous interposition of a saint prayed to, though the cures be slow and gradual, and though usual probable remedies are, at the same time, tried. Bred up, from their infancy, in a persuasion that miraculous powers are continued in their church, and exercised by the intercession of their saints; to the prayers and masses offered to them they attribute all, and to the skill of the physician and his medicines administered, nothing. Hence may we see their shrines and altars loaded with offerings of persons professing themselves indebted for their cures to St. Francis or St. Anthony, when they ought rather to have acknowledged their obligations to Hippocrates or Boerhaave.

Reason points out to us this general rule: never to attribute any event to a miraculous interposition, when we can trace the operation of natural adequate causes. But the writers of the Breviary, the biographers of the Romish saints, and but too many others of that communion, seem to reverse the rule, and to think that the bare possibility of there being a miraculous interposition in any particular case, is sufficient to warrant their believing that there really was. And this is obvious, not only from the cures which they ascribe to their saints, but also from other events which they look upon as miraculous. Thus some celebrated relicks, or some favourite

image exposed to public view and public devotion, are looked upon to have brought about a change of weather, which would have happened however, and which perhaps the barometer had foretold.

But though, in many of the cures ascribed by the superstitious Roman catholics to a miraculous intercession, we can trace the operation of the usual natural causes, I must not conceal that they lay claim to a standing power of performing one particular cure, where the spiritual means made use of are so closely connected with the supposed change wrought upon the patients, as to exclude every other cause from acting. You may easily guess that I have in my eye the cures of persons said to be possessed by the Devil, by sprinkling them with holy water, by the application of relicks, by prayers, by making signs of the cross, and using other ceremonies comprised under the general term of exorcising.

That such feats are exhibited to public view, and frequently transacted in the churches of Roman catholics, is well known. But certainly they are the most improper instances that could possibly be pitched upon, as proofs of the reality of a miraculous power subsisting in their church. For, if what has been offered under the present head satisfy us how little reason the papists have for believing that there is any thing supernatural in the cures they boast of, even when there are no grounds for doubting of the reality of the disease, much less reason is there for believing that there is any thing supernatural performed, when the reality of the disease (of the only disease a standing power of curing which is claimed) is apparently suspicious. Now this is remarkably the case of the demoniacs of the church

of Rome. A few grimaces, wild gestures, disorderly agitations, and blasphemous exclamations, suited to the character of the supposed infernal inhabitants, constitute all we know of their disease; and consequently, as all these symptoms are ambiguous, and may be assumed at pleasure by an impostor, a collusion between the exorcist and the person exorcised will account for the whole transaction, and every one, who would avoid the character of being superstitiously credulous, will naturally account for it in this manner, rather than by supposing that any supernatural cause intervened.

Nay, indeed, the appearances of imposture and collusion, with regard to the casting out of devils amongst papists, are so glaring, that there are few of themselves who care much to boast of the exploits of their exorcists, and therefore there seems less need to enter upon any detection of them here. However, for your amusement, you may peruse, in the note, a story which, while it will expose to you the frauds practised with regard to relicks, will lead you also naturally to conclude, that when the persons out of whom devils are supposed by papists to be cast, are treated as they were in the story I shall quote, there will always be a like scene of gross imposture brought to light¹.

¹ In the year 1564, prince Christopher of Radzivil having taken a journey to Rome, out of devotion, the pope, at his departure, made him a present of a box of relicks, which, on his return to Poland, soon became famous in all that country. Some months had hardly passed, when some monks came to beg the use of his relicks, in order to relieve a man possessed by the Devil. The prince having complied with their request, the box was, with great solemnity, carried to church, and being applied to the body of him that was possessed, the Devil presently went out,

And here I cannot but lament, with Dr. Mead^m, with the grimaces and gestures usual on such occasions. A miracle! was the instant cry of all the spectators, and the prince himself blessed God, with hands and eyes lifted up to heaven, for favouring him with so powerful a treasure. Not long after, the prince being talking of what he had seen, and boasting of the virtue of his relicks, one of his gentlemen smiled, and after many promises of forgiveness, ingenuously told him, that in their return from Rome, he had unhappily lost the box of relicks, but, for fear of his anger, had caused another to be made as like as possible to the true one, which he had filled with all the little bones and other trinkets that he could meet with: and that this was the box which the monks made him believe had performed the miracle. The prince sent next morning for the monks, and inquired if they knew of any demoniac who had need of his relicks. One was soon found to act his part in this farce, and the prince caused him to be exorcised in his presence. But when all they could do would not prevail upon the Devil to dislodge himself, the prince ordered the monks to withdraw, and delivered over the possessed man to another kind of exorcists, some Tartars belonging to his stables, to be well lashed, till he should confess the cheat. The demoniac at first thought to have carried it off by horrible gestures and grimaces, but the Tartars, laying on their blows in good earnest, quickly moved the Devil to confess the truth, and beg pardon of the prince. Next morning the monks, who suspected nothing of what had passed, being sent for again, in their presence the man threw himself at the prince's feet, and confessed that he was not possessed with the Devil, nor ever had been in his life. The monks would have persuaded the prince that this was an artifice of the Devil, who spoke through the mouth of that man; but when he called for his Tartars to exorcise another Devil, the father of lies, out of them also, they began to change their language, and confessed the cheat. The detection of this imposture had such an effect on the prince, that he, soon after, made open profession of the reformed religion. See this story in archbishop Wake's Defence of the Exposition of the Doctrine of the Church of England, part ii. p. 196, 197; or Drelincourt's Réponse à M. le Landgrave Ernest, p. 348, §. 60.

^m *Quis non merito irridet solennes istos Romæ pontificum*

the prejudice which Christianity receives from the perpetration of such pious frauds, or rather, as one may express it, diabolical inventions. For though this trick of dispossessing the Devil may perhaps impose upon a few; yet the wiser sort, who see through the imposture, are but too often induced to believe that a religion supported by such frauds hath no better support, and are led to reject Christianity, on account of the shameless arts to which they see its professors have recourse.

But to return; besides this power of dispossessing of devils, (which is the only standing miraculous cure of the church of Rome,) standing miracles of another kind are boasted of by papists. Miracles which, upon examination, will dwindle into mere legerdemain tricks, or at least into effects of a superior acquaintance with the powers and properties of material compositions. The liquefaction of the congealed blood of St. Januarius, performed annually at Naples, on the festival of that saint, as it is the most celebrated of all such miracles said to subsist in the church, deserves to be taken notice of by me.

Now that a substance, visibly dry and solid, having the appearance of coagulated blood, enclosed in a glass hermetically sealed, actually does melt, while

ritus, quibus exorcizantur, ut loqui amant, dæmoniaci, dum homines gestus quosdam et furores, quales a malis geniis provenire putantur, simulare docti, aqua lustrali et precibus quibusdam, quasi incantamentis, sui compotes fieri, et a cacodæmonibus liberari sese fingant? Verum istæ præstigiæ, quantumvis oculis et mentibus ignaræ plebis illudant; paullo tamen sagaciores non modo offendunt, sed et revera ipsis nocent. Hi enim, dolo perspecto, ad impietatem proni ducuntur. *Medica Sacra, præf.*

held by the priest in his hands, and brought near to the saint's head, which is placed on the altar, is a fact which thousands of spectators are eyewitnesses of every year. But however extraordinary this may seem, to suppose, as the Neapolitans do, that there is any miracle in the case, would be to make the experiments of the natural philosopher, and the transmutations of the chymist, deserve this name, as some of them are far more surprising than the liquefaction of this saint's pretended blood. The particular natural cause is not indeed absolutely agreed upon. Some have imagined that the heat of the hands of the priests, who keep tampering with the phial of blood, during the celebration of mass, will be sufficient to make it meltⁿ. Others again have been inclined to believe that the liquefaction is effected by the heat of vast numbers of wax tapers of a most enormous size, with which the altar is decked out, and many of which are placed so conveniently, that the priest can, without any appearance of design,

ⁿ Dr. Middleton, in his Letter from Rome, quotes Mabillon much to this purpose: "But by what way soever" (continues the doctor) "it be effected, it is plainly nothing else but the "copy of an old cheat of the same kind, transacted near the "same place, which Horace makes himself merry with in his "Journey to Brundusium; telling us, how the priests would "have imposed upon him and his friends, at a town called "Gnatia, by persuading them that the frankincense in the "temple used to dissolve and melt miraculously of itself, with- "out the help of fire." *Letter from Rome*, p. 209.

The passage of Horace alluded to is as follows:

..... dehinc Gnatia lymphis

Iratis exstructa dedit risusque, jocosque;

Dum flamma sine, thura liquecere limine sacro

Persuadere cupid: credat Judæus Apella

Non ego. —

SAT. I. 5. 97.

hold the glass so near to them as to make it hot, and consequently dispose the enclosed substance to melt. I should be inclined to subscribe to this opinion, had I not met with a more probable solution. I am informed (for I never tried the experiment myself) that a composition of crocus martis and cochineal will perfectly resemble congealed blood; and by dropping the smallest quantity of aquafortis amongst this composition, its dry particles will be put into a ferment, till at last an ebullition is excited, and the substance becomes liquid. That a glass may be so contrived as to keep the aquafortis separate from the dry substance, till the critical moment when the liquefaction is to be effected, may be easily conceived. And, in fact, the phial which contains the pretended blood is so constituted. It is something like an hour-glass, and the dry substance is lodged in the upper division. Now in the lower division of the glass a few drops of aquafortis may be lodged, without furnishing any suspicion, as the colour will prevent its being distinguished. All the attendant circumstances of this bungling trick^o are perfectly well accounted for by admitting this solution. Whenever the priest would have the miracle take effect, he need only invert the glass, and then the aquafortis, being uppermost, will drop down upon the dry substance, and excite an ebullition which resembles melting. And upon restoring the glass to its former position, the spectator will see the substance, the particles of which have been separated by the aquafortis, drop down to the bot-

^o Mr. Addison's expression, in his Travels; and as he saw the miracle performed, when he was at Naples, his judgment of it is much to the purpose.

tom of the glass, in the same manner that the sand runs through. The Neapolitans (as fit subjects to be imposed upon as the most servile bigotry and superstitious credulity can make them) esteem this annual miracle as a mark of the protection of Heaven, and whenever the blood fails to melt, a general panic ensues. Now, upon a supposition that I have assigned the real cause, the priests can prevent the success of the miracle whenever they please; and accordingly we know that they actually do so, when they have any prospect of advancing their own interest, by infusing a notion into the minds of the Neapolitans that Heaven is angry with their nation^p.

But why do I send you to the extremities of Italy, to see this notable miracle performed by papists? An itinerant chymist, some years ago, entertained the protestant inhabitants of Great Britain with the same feat, for the small price of a shilling; and I am told that it is a standing exploit in the experiment room of Mr. King, who, I believe, does not pretend to be a conjurer, or worker of miracles, on the strength of it.

To mention any more standing miracles^q would

^p Some few years ago the court of Naples having quarrelled with the pope, his holiness prevailed upon Januarius not to let his blood melt that year.

^q Not only the church of Rome, but the eastern churches also, have their standing annual miracles. An instance of which we have in Maundrell's account of his Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem; where the reader will find a particular description of the manner in which the patriarch of the Armenians brings fire out of the holy sepulchre. This annually repeated operation carries so visibly the air of an imposture, in

be unnecessary, as none I ever heard of can vie in reputation with the melting of Januarius's blood, which, as we have shewn, may be a trick worthy of a juggler, rather than a miracle performed by Heaven.

The pretended miracles of paganism and popery have, I hope, been sufficiently exposed by placing them in their true light, as being either the interested contrivances of imposture, or the fanciful misconceptions of credulity. But little has been done to establish the credibility of the gospel miracles, if I rest here; if I do not convince you, by an accurate view of the evidences supporting them, that they can be easily distinguished from those spurious events of the marvellous kind, which infidelity has set up in opposition to them.

This task I now enter upon; and I shall begin it by shewing, that the objections which effectually disprove the miraculous nature of those boasted cures of diseases, just examined by me, will not hold good when applied to the cures performed by Jesus, and recorded in the Gospels.

What, then, was the natural cause which I assigned as adequate to bring about the cures attributed to the intercession of the abbé Paris? This appeared to be strong impressions made on the minds of fanciful enthusiastic persons, by the confidence they had in praying to their saint. Now it is evident that this cannot be affirmed of many of the objects relieved by Jesus.

When he first appeared as a worker of miracles, the judgment of the ignorant Turks, that it does infinite disservice to the cause of Christianity amongst them.

he stood singly, backed by no sect, espoused by no party. He was not revered, from the beginning, by any number of followers, wrapped up with high notions of his sanctity, or opinion of his power; but gained his followers in consequence of the works which he performed, to make himself known. Nay, far from having any party for him, every body had the strongest prejudices against him. That he was a Galilean, and that he was a carpenter's son, had this effect amongst the Jews. The supplicants at the tomb of the abbé Paris were, previously to their application to him, his followers and admirers, and consequently had the strongest confidence in the efficacy of their application. But how could the obscure, the despised Jesus, find the first persons who were cured by him, with their minds thus affected, with a confidence thus fixed on him? True, indeed, when once his fame had gone about through Judæa, and his reputation had been spread by those whom he had healed, then may we suppose that some of those who were brought before him to be cured, had a confidence and expectation of relief. Yet, even in this period of his ministry, many cures were performed under such circumstances, that the relief received could not be owing to the above-mentioned cause. In the cure of the Roman centurion's servant, related both by St. Matthew^r and St. Luke^s, we may observe, that the sick person was lying at home, and that the application for relief was not made to Jesus by the servant himself, but by his master. A similar instance we have in the case of the nobleman's son of Capernaum related by St. John^t.

^r Matth. viii. 5, &c.

^s Luke, the beginning of the seventh chapter. ^t John iv. 46.

Again; we have several instances in the Gospels of cures performed on persons who, though present, made no application to Jesus for relief, as not knowing at all, or else not believing, that he had power to heal them. Of this sort are the cures of the infirm man lying at the pool^u; of the man born blind^x; of the dropsical person^y, and of him who had the withered hand^z. In all which cases there could be no impressions made on the minds of the patients, that could contribute any thing to the relief received.

But, secondly; though we were to grant that every one cured by Jesus had a confidence in the efficacy of their application to him, there is one very remarkable circumstance which clearly demonstrates that the benefit they received could not be owing to this cause. And this is, the success of the application to Jesus was equal on all the patients, and every one who applied to him was cured. This fact appears indubitably from the Gospels^a, and

^u John v. from the beginning. ^x John ix. all the chapter.

^y Luke xiv. 2, 3, 4. ^z Mark iii. 1—5.

^a It may not be improper to confirm this, by collecting the following texts: *Healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.* Matth. iv. 23, 24. *And he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick.* Matth. viii. 16. *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.* Matth. ix. 35. *Great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all.* Matth. xii. 15. *And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with*

furnishes us with the strongest argument that these cures could not be occasioned by the force of any impressions made on their minds. For, whence

compassion towards them, and he healed their sick, Matth. xiv. 14. And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole. Matth. xiv. 35, 36. Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. Luke iv. 40. And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all. Luke vi. 19. From these and many other texts, which for brevity I omit, I think it plain that every one who applied to Jesus was healed. Indeed there is one or two texts which, at first sight, may be thought to contradict this. We read, Mark vi. 5, that Jesus *could do no mighty works there, (in his own country,) save that he laid his hands upon a few sick, and healed them.* But what St. Mark tells us Jesus could not do, St. Matthew relates simply as what he did not do: *and he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief; Matth. xiii. 58.* So that from comparing these two texts, it appears that if Jesus did not perform many mighty works in his own country, this was not because there was any failure of power in him, but because of their unbelief, which deprived him of opportunities of displaying his miraculous power, (as few would, in this case, bring their sick to be healed by him,) and which rendered it unfit that he should perform many mighty works among them; as their prejudices against him, on account of his low estate, would, he knew, make his miracles of no effect. He therefore abstained from performing them amongst his countrymen, benevolent even in this, as their guilt would have been aggravated, if, in spite of miracles, they had continued to reject the gospel. And if, in other places of the Gospels, we find Jesus requiring faith, in the persons who applied to him for relief, the reason of this was not that their faith was a cause which contributed to their cure, in a natural way, but only that it rendered them fit objects of having so great a blessing conferred on them.

does it happen that the skill of medicine has never been able to find out any remedy that will have exactly the same effect on every one that uses it? From this cause, evidently, that men's constitutions differ as much as do their faces. And, therefore, it always will happen, that when vast numbers of people try the same remedy, some of them will receive greater benefit than others, and many of them, it is likely, will receive no benefit at all. Now Jesus's ministry lasted between three and four years, during all which space of time *he went about doing good, healing every infirmity of the people:*" so that the number of those who applied to him for their cures must have been very great. Admitting, therefore, that every one of them had a confidence in the efficacy of their application, yet that this confidence should produce the same effect, without any variation, on so many persons, is a thing so incredible, that he must indeed be an easy believer who can suppose it. Observe how it was with those who applied to the abbé Paris. Were they all cured? So far from this, that inconsiderable, vastly so, was the number of those who received any benefit. The invariableness, therefore, of the success of so many applications to Jesus, makes a remarkable distinction between the cures ascribed to him, and those attributed to the abbé Paris, a difference which points out a different cause. Had ten thousand persons prayed to the host for their cures at the same time, and all of them been immediately relieved; and if for three or four years every one who had made the same application had met with the same success, I should have justly deserved to be laughed at, had I ascribed all this to the cause which, it is highly

probable, effected the single cure of madame de la Fosse.

Since then it appears that the cures ascribed to Jesus cannot be accounted for by that particular cause above mentioned, let us now see in what other way they can be accounted for, without allowing them to be miracles. And there is apparently no other evasion left but this, to say that the same cures would have happened, although Jesus had never been applied to, and that his word or touch contributed as little to the effects produced, as the striking of a clock contributes to any particular effect produced at the same instant by the operation of its proper cause. But surely, they who can seriously urge this objection do not sufficiently attend to the following circumstances.

Had the word or touch of Jesus concurred only with a few cures, while in other cases no effect followed from them, then indeed there might have been room for arguing that the cures attributed to him would have happened, though he had never spoken the word, or touched the patient. But it was not once or twice, or a few times, that Jesus's interposition and the recovery of a sick person concurred, but I may say in innumerable instances ; the experiment was tried on vast multitudes, labouring under all possible variety of diseases, and never tried in vain. Can it, therefore, be said, that all these cures might equally have happened, although the patients had never been brought to Jesus ? At this rate, be so kind as to ascertain when and in what case we can discover that any particular cause has operated.

What strengthens my observation is this, that not

only did the application to Jesus and the cure always concur, as often as the experiment was tried ; but farther, they concurred instantaneously. No sooner was the word spoken by him, but the cripple walked, the deaf heard, the dumb spake, the blind saw. A concurrence so exact, so critical as this, excludes all other causes from having any share in the operation. For to imagine it possible that this concurrence could be quite accidental, in such a multiplicity of trials, and upon every trial, is as wild an opinion, as it would be to imagine that it could ever possibly happen, that for three or four years all the sick persons in London should recover at the instant when St. Paul's clock struck one. This then is the qualification I require, before we can be warranted to pronounce a cure to be miraculous, though instantaneously connected with means naturally insufficient. The concurrence and connexion must be observed to subsist, not only in many instances, but in every instance, where the experiment was made. And this qualification undoubtedly belongs to the cures ascribed to Jesus ; but to none other of all those boasted works set up in opposition to them.

Add to this, that in bringing about the cures attributed to the abbé Paris, and in general all the cures ascribed by credulous Roman catholics to the interposition of their saints, no living agent visibly interposes. Their saints, so far as any body can discover, give no signs of such interpositions, the cure does not follow any thing said or done by them, and consequently the spectators are left at full liberty to call in whatever cause reason may dictate or fancy suggest. But no such objection can be made against the miraculous interposition of

Jesus. The cures attributed to him he also claimed as his works. He spake the word, or touched the patient, or he prayed to Heaven, or he made clay and anointed the eyes, asserting, at the same time, that these his words or actions were the cause of the cures.

But why need I be at so much pains to shew that no natural cause brought about the cures attributed to Jesus, when we know that some of them were such as no natural cause could possibly bring about? Indeed, in general, we reason much in the dark, when we give our opinion as to a disease being naturally curable or not. The learned faculty, who certainly are the best judges, can give but little satisfaction on this point. For experience must furnish us with instances of sick persons, abandoned as incurable by one physician, cured through the superior skill, or perhaps better luck of another; and with instances of others who, pronounced incurable by every physician, have, by trying some remedy, the prescription of whim or suggestion of fancy, been completely cured. At best, even the physician can in most cases only give his conjecture; for till physic proceed upon surer principles than it does in its present state, the skill of the best physician is in general but conjecture. However, I think amidst all this ambiguity and darkness, a disease may, with certainty, be pronounced incurable in a natural way, when the cure cannot be effected without exerting a power of creation. Now, though physicians who have treated of the diseases cured by Jesus have certainly gone too far in representing them all^b as naturally incurable, there are some

^b Thomas Bartholin de Morbis Biblicis, apud Crenii Fascicu-

of them which were undoubtedly beyond the power of human means to cure, because they consisted in

lum, tom v. Roterodam, 1695. Gulielmus Ader Enarratio de Ægrot. et Morbis in Evangel. apud Tractat. Biblic. in Critic. Sacr. p. 3360, 3367. tom. ix. Lond. Bartholin also quotes one Mercurialis, who had written to the same purpose. Dr. Mead, in his *Medica Sacra*, does not carry the matter so far. For though he expresses himself of opinion that the woman cured by Jesus of an issue of blood of twelve years' continuance, and the other who was cured of an infirm habit of body with which she had been bent for two and twenty years, could have received no relief in a natural way; yet he is far from asserting any such thing with regard to the cures of the palsy, epilepsy, and madness; which two last diseases, he is of opinion, were the complaints of the persons called demoniacs. And here I am naturally led to say somewhat on this particular miracle, so often ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels, the accounts of which the enemies of Christianity have treated with so much ridicule, and which many of the most learned amongst Christians have thought liable to great difficulties. Certain it is, that the cures of demoniacs recorded in the New Testament have been the source of an infinity of scenes of imposture, and been imitated with such glaring marks of fraud, as have given our adversaries a pretence to dart their opprobrious taunts at a religion which needs not the assistance of fraud: though fraud, alas! has been too often applied to by some of its unworthy professors.

However, let us suppose, according to the prevailing opinion amongst Christians, that the demoniacs of the New Testament laboured under diseases supernaturally inflicted, and that their frantic symptoms were owing to their being possessed by demons, yet I cannot see why this should be treated with so much ridicule. The existence of demons, superior, invisible beings, will hardly be denied; and admitting their existence, who would be so bold as to assert that it is absurd or unreasonable to suppose that God should permit these beings, (who can never interfere in the government of the world but by God's permission on some extraordinary occasions,) at that extraordinary period when Christianity was to be confirmed by all the variety of miracles, to become the instruments of inflicting diseases, that the power

restoring maimed members, which could not be done without exerting a creative power. I need not in-

of Jesus and his apostles, over the inhabitants of the invisible world, might be the better demonstrated? This permission of the Deity cannot be charged with any absurdity, but by the scorner, who can with equal ease dress up the most evident deductions of reason in a garb of ridicule. Nor can the suspicions of fraud and collusion, so visible, as I observed above, in the exorcising of demoniacs, amongst the papists, be applicable to the instances of such cures recorded in the New Testament, because Jesus did not rest his claim to be a worker of miracles on them alone, (which is the case in the instances where we suspect fraud,) but performed also a vast variety of other cures, and, besides cures, many works which were in their own nature miraculous, and which remove all grounds of suspicion as to there being any fraud or collusion in the performance of this.

But while I think myself sufficiently warranted to defend the commonly received notion about the demoniacs of the New Testament from the ridicule of the infidel, I must at the same time observe, that the very learned and able author of the Enquiry into the Meaning of the Demoniacs has taken another way of putting a stop to the objections of cavillers on this head, by his attempt to prove that the demoniacs cured by Jesus did not labour under any disease supernaturally inflicted. And indeed this seems to be certain, that all the symptoms ascribed to them by the Evangelists are such as belong to diseases whose natural causes we can assign. *Insanorum hæc sunt omnia,* (all the particular symptoms of the demoniacs are to be met with in persons who are frantic,) says Dr. Mead in his *Medica Sacra*, p. 66. And if one of his skill in medicine gives this judgment, few will care to dispute it.

But the greatest difficulty in this scheme is still behind. For admitting that all the symptoms ascribed to the scripture demoniacs are to be found in mad people, yet does not the scripture positively say that this madness was supernaturally inflicted? And how can the many texts in which mention is made of Jesus's rebuking the unclean spirits, of his conversing with them, of his casting them out, be reconciled with the opinion which makes the disease of these patients a mere natural madness?

form you, who are acquainted with the force of the original word, that this was the case with regard to

For an answer to these seemingly insuperable difficulties, I refer the learned reader to the Enquiry into the Meaning of the Demoniacs, and the Farther Enquiry, by the same eminent hand, who has done more than at first sight one could imagine possible, to remove these difficulties, by giving such interpretations of the texts, which stand most in the way of his scheme, as when compared with certain opinions and prejudices, entertained by the Jews in our Saviour's time, will, in his opinion, reconcile them to his hypothesis, that the demoniacs of the New Testament laboured under diseases merely natural. He has observed, what must be allowed to be true, that the Jews attributed to the influence of evil spirits all diseases whose symptoms were extraordinary, and in particular those by which the body was distorted, and the mind disturbed with melancholy or phrensy. Dr. Lightfoot's words are, “*Judæis usitatissimum erat morbos quosdam graviores, eos præsertim quibus vel dis-tortum est corpus, vel mens turbata et agitata phrenesi, malis spiritibus attribuere.*” Hor. Heb. ad Matth. xvii. 15. And Maimonides is quoted by the same writer, Hor. Heb. ad Luk. xiii. 11, as telling us that the Jews called every sort of melancholy an evil spirit, and as explaining evil spirit to mean only disease. That the idea of being possessed with a demon was always annexed to that of madness by the Jews, the author of the Enquiry shews also from several passages in the New Testament, see John vii. 20. Matth. xi. 18. John viii. 48—52, and John x. 20. In the last text we read, *Many said, He hath a devil, and is mad.* Here madness is imputed to our Saviour, and the imagined cause is—*he hath a devil.*

This then being the case; every madman being thought, by those with whom Jesus conversed, and to whom the Evangelists wrote, to be possessed with a demon, Jesus in curing such patients, and the Evangelists in relating their cures, according to the plan of the author of the Enquiry, makes use of the terms which custom had made technical. When once words are applied by universal custom to such and such disorders, however ill grounded, silly, or superstitious the words be, originally, they must be made use of by every one who speaks of these disor-

the *κυλλοί*, the maimed, who, as we learn from St. Matthew, ch. xv. ver. 30, were amongst the persons who received their cures from Jesus; and one would indeed be a caviller, who could assert that a blindness from the mother's womb, (and such blindness was cured by Jesus,) when it arises from some original defect in the organs of vision, not merely from some obstruction in the humours of the eye, did not also require a power of creation in order to be removed.

After all, though none of the cures performed by Jesus had required the exertion of a creative power

ders, in order to his being understood. Nor can it be thought that Jesus, by accommodating his language to the prevailing opinion about the cause of madness, gave any countenance to this superstitious hypothesis. At this rate a philosopher, who talks of the sun's rising or setting, may be said to countenance the exploded system of Ptolomy. “Jesus made use of words which “custom had sanctified; and his business was to cure the dis-“eases before him. He has said nothing to affirm or deny the “power of demons, nor was it to his purpose; but he used the “language that others did, and spoke of distempers as now a “physician would, that should use the common terms of art, “without affirming or denying the cause of the disease by such “language.” *Farther Enquiry*, p. 106. Such, in general, are the principles of this author; and if it should be thought that he has failed in proving his point, and that some of his interpretations are too harsh to be admitted, this at least must be allowed to him, “that the cause of Christ is not affected by the solu-“tion he maintains. For in both cases a real miracle is done; “the person affected is cured; and the evidence arising from “miracles, for the truth of Christianity, is equally strong. The “miracle is the same, if the person be cured, whatever is the “cause of his distemper, whether it proceeds from unclean spi-“rits, and their operations upon human bodies; or from any de-“fect, or from any preternatural and extraordinary motions in “them.” *Preface to the Enquiry*.

to effect them, we should, nevertheless, have had infallible assurance that they were performed miraculously, and by a person vested with a supernatural power. For though Jesus went about healing every infirmity of the people, he did not rest his claim to be a worker of miracles on his power of healing alone. His history furnishes us with a variety of works performed by him, the performance of which was indisputably beyond the reach of any natural causes.

Some, indeed, who, of late years, have written against the force of the argument drawn from miracles, in order to evade this, have urged, that we have no certain rule by which to judge whether an event be miraculous or no; because we cannot be certain how far the powers of natural causes may possibly reach. But in answer to this it has been most justly remarked, that though in some cases we have no certainty how far the powers of natural causes may extend, yet are we able to pronounce with the greatest certainty, in other cases, how far they cannot extend. Particularly, whenever an effect happens which is, evidently and sensibly, contradictory to laws known to be fixed and established in nature, we may pronounce with certainty that such an effect cannot be accounted for, but by admitting the interposition of a cause overruling and suspending the established course of things. And if we examine the works of Jesus recorded in the Gospels, we shall find many of them to be of this kind.

For can any power of natural causes convert water into wine? Can it be possible, in a natural way, to feed thousands with a few small loaves and fishes, and so as that the fragments left should

greatly exceed the original quantity of the food? Could it be owing to any natural cause that Jesus walked on the sea, and caused the tempest to cease at his command? In a word, who can be so perverse as to affirm that the dead could be raised from their graves, and the spiritual principle re-united to the lifeless corpse, but by the interposition of the same cause which first breathed into the inanimate clay the breath of life? All these, and many other such facts recorded of Jesus, are in their own nature miraculous, and consequently, though I should not have removed all your doubts with regard to the cures performed by him, we should still have the most satisfying proofs of his being a worker of miracles. But I see not why we should not insist upon all his cures as so many miracles; for though the circumstances of them, which I have mentioned, would not have established this to your conviction, as I hope they have, yet I should look upon it as the height of absurd scepticism, to doubt whether Jesus could cure the paralytic, or the blind, when we see him raising Lazarus, the widow's son, the ruler of the synagogue's daughter, and, lastly, himself, from the dead; or to pretend that the person who could exert a creative power, in turning water into wine, and in multiplying a few loaves and fishes, so as to be food for thousands of people, is not to be believed, when he claims to himself the power of healing the sick.

Having offered what must be looked upon as abundantly sufficient to shew, that all the extraordinary works ascribed to Jesus were such as required the exertion of supernatural power, I come now, as I proposed, to produce the proofs that such

a supernatural power was most undoubtedly exerted by him, as is related in the New Testament.

When I examined the miracles reported to have been performed amongst the Pagans, and amongst Christians, since the publication of the gospel, I laid down some general rules, by which we may try them, one and all, wherever they occur, and which will set forth the grounds upon which we suspect the accounts of them to be false. And we found that none of these boasted wonders could be assigned, which were not liable to one or more of the following objections, each of which is a sufficient ground for rejecting the particular facts that are affected by it. What then were these objections? First, that they were not published to the world till long after the time when said to be performed; secondly, that they were not published in the places where it is pretended they were wrought, but only propagated at a great distance from the supposed scene of action; thirdly, that if the accounts of them were published at the time when, and at the places where they are reported to be performed, the circumstances under which they were published, favoured their passing without examination, and screened them from detection.

These then being the grounds upon which we suspect those accounts of miracles to be false, I cannot take a more effectual way to convince you that the gospel miracles are true, than to shew that none of the above grounds of suspicion can be applied to them, by proving, first, that they were published at the time when; secondly, they were published at the places where said to be performed; and, thirdly, that the circumstances under which they were

published, are such as satisfy us they underwent a careful examination, and must have been detected, had they been impostures.

And though the establishing of these points will prove that the testimony for the miracles believed by the protestant Christian is stronger than that urged for the miracles he rejects, and consequently will warrant his making the distinction he does between them; in order to remove every ground of cavilling, I shall not rest the merits of my cause here, but proceed still farther, by attempting to prove, first, that the testimony which supports the miracles recorded in the New Testament is not only stronger than that which supports any pretended wonders, but also that it is the strongest that can be supposed, or that from the nature of the thing could be had; and, secondly, that besides the unexceptionable proof from testimony, the credibility of the gospel miracles is strengthened by collateral evidences, peculiar to themselves, and of the most striking nature. I must beg your attention while I go through all these particulars, and shall begin with proving, that the objections which have been shewn to affect the testimony for the miracles which we reject, are not applicable to the testimony for the miracles which we believe.

First, then, the miracles of Jesus were published and appealed to at the very time when said to be performed. We have shewn that many of the most boasted wonders of paganism and popery cannot be traced up to any contemporary witnesses, and were not heard of till length of time had thrown a veil over the imposture. Now we have all the certainty that can be had for a matter of this kind, that the

same objection does not lie against the miracles of the gospel.

It would be extremely impertinent in me to enter upon a proof, that the books in which we have an account of the miracles of Jesus are as old as the time they lay claim to. What was never disputed by the enemies of Christianity in its earliest ages, when opportunities and means of inquiry were to be had, would be denied with a very ill grace, and with very little probability of success, after seventeen hundred years have elapsed. It is sufficient to observe at present, that every rule of criticism, by which the genuineness of ancient books is established, gives testimony to the genuineness of the books of the New Testament, to its being the work of those authors whose name it bears. Internal marks of spuriousness, which have generally overturned the credit of supposititious writings, never have been, nor ever can be produced. External corroborating testimonies cannot be supposed stronger than those we can urge, to prove that our sacred books are not the work of any later age. We can trace them up from century to century, till we arrive at the very period when they are said to have been written. We can trace them up, I say, mentioned by the writers of every age, and quoted by a chain of authors, beginning with contemporary ones, whose works the severest critics cannot set aside, without destroying all certainty, without giving up the genuineness of every ancient production^c.

^c The reader who would see the collateral support of the genuineness and antiquity of the New Testament, as confirmed by other writings, may be satisfied by looking into Lardner's Credibility of the Gospel History.

But granting the books of the New Testament to be the genuine productions of those whose names they bear, still you will object, (as I remember you have objected to me,) that it will not follow from this that the miracles of Jesus were published and avowed, till long after the time assigned for them. The Gospel of St. John, you observed, is not thought to have been written, at least not to have been published, till sixty years after the death of Jesus, about the year 97. St. Luke did not write his Gospel, if the evidence of antiquity is to be taken, till after the year of Christ 61; that is, twenty-seven years after his death. St. Mark, indeed, wrote before these two Evangelists, but two years posterior to St. Matthew, the earliest of all the gospel historians; and St. Matthew never was affirmed by any one to have written before the year 41; that is, eight after the death of Jesus, though others, perhaps with better authority, fix the date of his Gospel many years lower. From these facts, admitted by Christians, you inferred, that granting the Gospels to be genuine, still the highest antiquity any of them can boast of comes short, several years, of the time when the miracles there related are said to have been performed; and consequently, that the testimony for the miracles of Jesus cannot be said to have been published, till length of time had rendered an examination of their pretensions difficult to be set about.

I have fairly represented the strength of your objection, and what follows is, in my opinion, a sufficient answer.

Writers in defence of Christianity have indeed contented themselves, in general, with tracing up the testimony of the gospel miracles to the time

when the histories of them were written; and they thought this sufficient, because, though that time be posterior by many years to any of the facts, yet it was not so long after, but that many who had it in their power to detect the fraud, if there was any, must have been still alive. But, sir, it is not merely from the Gospels that we Christians infer that Jesus's miracles were publicly avowed in his own time: no, though the Gospels had never been written, we should still have had sufficient grounds for affirming this. However paradoxical this assertion may seem, it can be well supported; for grant us only this concession, (if what was never disputed can be called a concession,) that Jesus lived and died at the time Christians say he did; and this, of itself, will prove that his pretension to miracles was coeval with him.

That a new religion was taught by Jesus is confirmed by the concurrent testimony of all antiquity, of Jewish and Pagan, as well as of Christian writers; and is also evident from the change which we know was introduced into the state of religion, which change all history fixes to that very period which Christians assign for it. And that Jesus's claim to miracles was coeval with the first publication of Christianity is obvious; because the whole superstructure of gospel doctrines and precepts is built on this foundation. For unless Jesus had wrought miracles at the very time he taught, he must have defeated his own preaching. Upon no other grounds, but the authority of God being with him, manifested by miracles, could he hope for success amongst the believers of a former revelation, sanctioned by the miracles of Moses and the pro-

phets his successors. Besides, that Jesus laid claim to miracles may be inferred from the character which we are as certain he assumed, as we are certain he existed. I mean that of his being the Messiah expected by the Jews. For as the Messiah was marked in their prophecies as one who should perform miracles, the claim of Jesus to be this illustrious person necessarily supposes a claim to those extraordinary works which the Messiah was expected to perform. Add to this, that the great fundamental doctrine of Christianity, the redemption of mankind, by Christ's dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification, supposes a miracle the most striking that can be imagined. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead must have been publicly asserted wherever Christianity was preached, for it is the very cornerstone of the religion. If Christ be not risen from the dead, both the preaching of the apostle and the faith of the convert would have been vain.

Though, therefore, the written accounts of the miracles of Jesus, that is, the Gospels, were not published till many years after his death, yet, as we know for certain that Christianity was preached during the whole intervening time; and as we are equally certain that it could not be preached without laying claim to miracles, for these reasons I think myself warranted to conclude, that the miracles ascribed to the founder of Christianity do not labour under the first defect of testimony, which has been shewn to affect many of the pretended miracles set up in opposition to them, but were co-eval with the preaching of Christianity, and openly

avowed at the very time when they are said to have been wrought^d.

But, secondly, not only were the miracles ascribed to Jesus publicly attested, before length of time rendered an examination of the pretension difficult; they were also attested at the very places where the scene of them was laid. Unlike, in this, to many of the lying wonders, the reporters of which have wisely guarded against a detection of the imposture, by publishing them at such a distance from the pretended scene of action, that no examination could be made. It has been objected, indeed, that of the written accounts of Jesus's miracles, only one of them, St. Matthew's, is affirmed to have been published on the spot: and that the other three Gospels

^d But though the Gospels were not written till many years after, yet, as Christianity had been preached from the very time of the facts, this gives us a moral certainty that the same facts now written were before publicly known to be true. The Christian religion was founded on facts; these facts were coeval with the religion, and could not but be public wherever the religion was preached; so that though none of the Evangelists did write till some years after Jesus died, yet the facts they mention must be the very facts already published, as done by Jesus; otherwise they could have been confuted by every one who might see the Gospels. For if the apostles, who from the very beginning publicly preached the miracles of Jesus, had varied the facts, and put down any in their written Gospels, different from those on which Christianity had been just founded, this contradiction would have effectually overturned their cause. From which circumstances I think we may draw this inference, that we have the same miraculous facts recorded in the Gospels, which had been appealed to from the beginning of the preaching of Christianity, that is, all the time intervening that in which they wrote and our Saviour's death.

were written at such a distance^e from Judæa, where the miracles were said to have been performed, as put it out of every one's power, into whose hands they came, of examining into the truth of the facts contained in them. Now I grant that the matter of your objection cannot be denied ; for three of the Gospels were published at a vast distance from the scene of Jesus's miracles. But though I were to allow that this was also the case of the fourth Gospel, your cause would not in the least be benefited ; because we could still prove unexceptionably, that Jesus's miracles were first published and avowed at the very places where the scenes of them are laid. For, from what was observed under the foregoing head, we know that wherever Christianity was preached, miracles were appealed to. Now as Judæa was the scene of all the miracles of Jesus, so you cannot deny that it was in Judæa where Christianity was first preached, and consequently that the miracles appealed to by the first preachers of it were appealed to on the very spot.

And as the miracles of Jesus were published at the time when, and in the places where said to be wrought, so, it is very remarkable that the reporters of them do not content themselves with asserting Jesus's miraculous power in general, but are at pains to descend to particular facts and instances of this power, which they relate with all their circumstances ; a method this which put it in every body's

^e The Gospel of St. Mark is supposed to have been written at Rome ; St. Luke's, according to some, at Rome also, though others will have it in Greece ; St. John's Gospel all agree to have been written at Ephesus.

power to satisfy himself of the truth or falsehood of what they report.

When reports of miracles are deficient in this qualification, little credit can be paid to them, because the persons to whom they are proposed are left in the dark as to every particular necessary to be examined, before they can know whether they are imposed upon or not.

But if we take the Gospels into our hands, and examine the accounts we have of the miracles recorded of Jesus, we shall at first sight observe, that every thing is mentioned by the reporters of them, that could be necessary to furnish means for inquiring into their foundation and certainty. They assert that Jesus, for the space of three or four years went about through all Judæa performing his wonderful works. And what these works were, they particularly relate: he turned water into wine; he fed thousands by creating food; he walked on the sea; the elements obeyed him; he healed every infirmity of the people, by giving health to the blind, the lame, the paralytic, the lunatic, the maimed; and, to crown all, he restored life to the dead. And as they tell us the particular facts, so also do they relate the circumstances. The scenes of them are not laid in corners and in deserts, where no witnesses could see, and no inquirers confute; but in the most public places, in the towns and villages, before crowds of spectators, in the synagogues, in the streets. Not content with testifying that Jesus raised the dead, his historians mention the particular persons thus raised, by their names, and specify their place of abode. In a word, the accounts we have of the miracles of Jesus seem to be drawn up

by persons confident that they could stand the test of any inquiry.

If, after all that has been said, you should still insist that these accounts of the miracles of Jesus above referred to were not written and published till length of time, and other circumstances, had destroyed the means of inquiry; I must here repeat, what I have already observed, that, independently of the testimony of the Evangelists, we are morally certain that instances of Jesus's miraculous power were appealed to on the very spot, and while the facts were yet recent in every one's mind. His last and his greatest miracle, his own resurrection, was a fact which its preachers from the beginning boldly and confidently appealed to. Now this fact was so circumstanced, that every inhabitant of Jerusalem (and to them it was that Jesus and the resurrection were first preached) had it in his power to know whether or not he was imposed upon. And you cannot but own, that they who furnish their adversaries with the means of detecting them, give no insignificant proof of their asserting nothing but what they know to be true.

Enough has been said to prove that the miracles ascribed to Jesus were appealed to at the very time, and on the very spot; and appealed to with such circumstances as enabled every body to examine into their pretensions. But as I granted that there are some instances of spurious miracles, of which all this may be equally affirmed, before I can be authorized to pronounce that the gospel miracles are better supported than any of these pretences are, I must proceed to satisfy you,

Thirdly, that the circumstances under which the

miracles of Jesus were published give us an assurance that they underwent a strict examination, and consequently that they could not have escaped a detection, had they been impostures.

Though some of the pretended miracles rejected by us may be traced up to contemporary witnesses, and were publicly attested on the spot, yet that they underwent no examination, I inferred from this, that no instances of them could be produced which were not liable to one or both of the following objections: either that the persons to whom the accounts of them were proposed, were previously disposed, through a blind credulity, and an eagerness of belief, to admit them unexamined; or that the persons who encouraged and promoted them were armed with power which rendered any examination impracticable. If, therefore, the reverse shall appear to be the case with regard to the gospel miracles, you cannot, consistently with your claim of impartiality, persist in asserting that the former stand upon the same footing of credibility with the latter.

First, then, I am to shew, that the persons who believed the miracles of Jesus, at their first publication, cannot be supposed to have admitted them without careful examination of the evidence, and the clearest conviction of their truth.

Had Jesus laid claim to miracles, without declaring the end proposed by them, in this case, as the facts would not have been generally interesting, few or none would have thought it worth while to examine into them. They might then have passed on, without notice, in their own age, and owed their future credit to the contempt they were treated with at first, which has no doubt frequently screened

forged miracles from a formal detection. But when we consider what the gospel miracles were connected with, that they were works urged by Jesus their performer as the foundation of a new religion, here the importance of the end left it no longer a matter of indifference whether they were true or false, but every one to whom they were proposed must have had a sufficient motive to weigh the evidence of them with care and diligence.

This argument acquires double strength, when we consider that the religion, in confirmation of which the miracles of Jesus were appealed to, was subversive of that believed by those to whom they were proposed. That pretensions to miracles whose end was to confirm opinions and doctrines already established should be admitted, without due examination, by the favourers of such opinions, is not at all to be wondered at; and this, as I have observed, greatly invalidates the most boasted wonders of property. But the miracles of Jesus, whose end was not to countenance, but to overturn the established doctrines, could not possibly meet with an easy reception; assent to them would be difficult to be obtained, and never could be obtained, without serious examination and the strongest conviction. Other pretensions to miracles did not gain credit, but after the establishment of those opinions which they were thought to confirm, and amongst persons previously biassed in favour of those opinions. But every thing is the reverse with regard to the miracles of Jesus, for they were previous to the belief of Christianity, and gave cause to the belief of it; every witness of them was a convert, and every believer had been an enemy.

But it has been alleged, that the Jews in general were extremely credulous, and prone to give credit to stories of the miraculous kind ; and that therefore there is room for a suspicion, that some of them might admit the miracles of Jesus without sufficient grounds and careful examination of the evidence. In answer to this, suffer me to observe, that granting the Jewish nation to be ever so much disposed to believe pretences to miracles, the end for which those of Jesus were said to be wrought must have hindered this general disposition from operating, so as to make them receive these particular miracles upon slight grounds. However apt any one may be to admit stories of the miraculous kind, yet he will not believe hastily such as have an obvious tendency to overturn his favourite sentiments. The cause of his too easy assent ceases here. So long as the miracles strike in with and confirm his settled opinions and prejudices, they will be too easily admitted ; but when once these begin to interfere, the more of credulity and enthusiasm there is in his temper, it will be the more difficult to obtain his assent. For instance, take one from any of the sects of enthusiasts amongst Christians, a Quaker, we will suppose, or a Methodist. How ready shall we find such a person to believe, upon the slightest grounds, the truth of a Divine revelation or inspiration pretended to by one of his own sect, and which tends to confirm its favourite doctrines ! Being extremely credulous, as we suppose from his general character, it is natural to imagine that he will greedily embrace, without weighing the evidence, a fact highly agreeable to his preconceived opinions, and which indeed he cannot examine coolly and impartially

through the previous bias of his mind. But put the case, that the same credulous Methodist is attacked on the footing of one's having had a revelation, which expressly condemned the tenets of Methodism, will the general credulity of his temper induce him to give this a ready admission? The reverse is obvious: the more of enthusiasm and credulity there is in him, the less liable will he be to be convinced. His prejudices will be too strong for the evidence of what is so disagreeable to him; or if he be convinced, the conviction of one so averse to it will be no weak motive to our believing, that such a revelation, to be believed by such a person, must have had very glaring marks of truth.

Supposing, therefore, what is objected to be true, (though I see no sufficient grounds for such a supposition,) that the disciples of Jesus, under which name I include, with the apostles, the whole multitude of believing Jews, were credulous persons, and previously disposed to believe miracles on slight grounds; yet, when we consider that the miracles of Jesus were connected with doctrines subversive of those which education and prejudice had rooted in their minds, from this we may infer, that their general credulity would rather obstruct than promote their conversion, and, consequently, that before such persons admitted Jesus's claim to be a divine teacher, they had carefully attended to the evidence of those miraculous facts, on the truth of which this claim was founded.

This may suffice to prove that credulity and eagerness of belief, on the part of those to whom the miracles of Jesus were proposed, was not the cause of the credit they met with. I come now to

shew, that on the part of those who encouraged and attested them, there was not only no possibility of a confederacy strong enough to obstruct an examination of the facts, but farther, that the persons who had all the means of examination in their hands actually put their power in execution, in order, if possible, to detect them.

Miracles the offspring of imposture, can never have any chance to gain credit, or pass undetected, in the time or at the place where they are pretended to be wrought, unless there is a strong confederacy on foot, privy to the imposture, and engaged to carry it on ; and this, as I observed, has been generally the case of the most noted pretensions of popery. But we have the fullest assurance that can possibly be had, that there was not any such confederacy on foot to propagate the miracles of Jesus. Had Christianity, indeed, been a religion already established in the world when these miracles were pretended to, and previously believed by those who believed the miracles, a combination to deceive the public might have been possible, and the very possibility of such a combination would justly have excited suspicions of its being real. But when we reflect from what beginnings Christianity arose, and in what manner it made its entrance into the world, that Jesus the great Founder of it had not one follower when he set up his claim, and that it was his miracles which gave birth to his sect, not the sect already established that appealed to his miracles ; from these circumstances we may conclude unexceptionably, that there could not possibly be a confederacy strong enough to obstruct an examination of the facts, and obtrude a history of lies upon the public.

But why need I insist upon this, when I can urge, farther, that even though there had been a confederacy amongst the witnesses of the gospel miracles, this could not have screened them from detection ; as the persons who had all the means of inquiry in their hands were engaged in interest to exert themselves on the occasion, nay, actually did put their power in execution, against the reporters of these miracles ?

Forged miracles may pass current where power and authority screen them from the too nice inquiry of examiners. But whenever it shall happen that those who are vested with the supreme power are bent upon opposing and detecting them, the progress which they make can be but small before the imposture is discovered, and sinks into obscurity and contempt. If this observation be well founded, as I am confident it is, that lying wonders should pass undetected amongst the papists will not be thought strange ; for, as I have already mentioned, such stories amongst them have generally been countenanced, if not invented, by those with whom alone the power of detecting the imposture and of punishing the impostors was lodged. Now the miracles of Jesus, it is notorious, were not thus sheltered. The evident, the declared tendency of his works, was to introduce a total change into the state of the world with regard to religious opinions. Is it then to be thought, that those who were vested with the supreme power would look on with indifference, and allow this change to be brought about ; a change which their interest prompted, and which their prejudices biassed them to prevent, and which, had there been any imposture in the case, they could

have prevented with the utmost ease, and in the most effectual manner, by examining into the facts appealed to, and dragging out the impostors to public infamy? Accordingly we find from history, that from the very beginning opposition of every kind was made to check the progress of Christianity by the rulers in that part of the world where it was first preached ; Jesus, the great Founder of it, was put to an ignominious death, and the persons who witnessed his miracles, on the very spot where they had been performed, were beaten, imprisoned, scourged, and stoned. That there was no imposture detected, therefore, could not be owing to want of proper examination. For we see that they who were best furnished with the means of inquiry and opposition did all they could : whom they could not confute, they punished ; whom they could not brand as impostors, they crowned as martyrs.

But perhaps you will object, what assurance have we that the witnesses of the miracles of Jesus were not detected ? How can we be certain that the Jewish priests and rulers did not convict them of imposture, by disproving the wondrous works ascribed by them to their Master ? Such an objection, though it may be urged by one who is resolved not to be convinced, can never be offered by any impartial inquirer after truth. We have as great certainty, as from the nature of the thing can be expected, that no such detection ever was made. Had the witnesses of Jesus's miracles been convicted of imposture, is it to be imagined that this remarkable fact would not have been handed down to posterity ? And yet no such thing is mentioned in any one history, in any one writer, either amongst the Jews or amongst the

pagans. On the contrary, it is a point not to be controverted, that the truth of the facts was admitted by the enemies of Christianity in general. For can it be imagined, that if the gospel miracles had been looked upon by them as mere forgeries, that the Jewish rabbins would have imagined their ridiculous solution of them, by ascribing them to Jesus's having stolen the ineffable name of Jehovah out of the temple^f; or that Hierocles^g, Celsus^h, Julianⁱ, and the rest of the heathen antagonists would have endeavoured to account for them by magic? And if these

^f See their Talmudical book called *Avoda Zara*, or of Idolatry, published by Edzard, at Hamburg, in 4to, 1705.

^g ἡμεῖς μὲν τὸν τοιαῦτα πεποιηκότα (meaning Apollonius of Tyana) οὐ θεὸν, ἀλλὰ θεοῖς κεχαρισμένον ἄνδρα ἡγούμεθα. Οἱ δὲ δι’ ὀλίγας τερατείας τινὰς τὸν Ἰησοῦν Θεὸν ἀναγορεύοντι. Philostratorum Opera c. 11. Lipsiæ, 1709. In this quotation, Hierocles compares the miracles of Apollonius with those of Jesus, the truth of which he evidently admits, and only blames the Christians for worshiping Jesus as a God.

^h Ἀνέπλαστε δέ τι ἔτερον συγκατατιθέμενος μέν, πως ταῖς παραδόξοις δυνάμεσιν ἃς Ἰησοῦς ἐποίησεν, ἐν αἷς τὸν πολλοὺς ἔπεισεν ἀκολουθεῖν αὐτῷ ὡς Χριστῷ· διαβάλλειν δ’ αὐτὰς βουλόμενος ὡς ἀπὸ μαγείας, καὶ οὐ θείᾳ δυνάμει γεγενημένας. φησὶ, γὰρ, αὐτὸν σκότιον τραφέντα, μισθαρνήσαντα εἰς Αἴγυπτον, δυνάμεων τινων πειραθέντα, ἐκεῖθεν ἐπανελθεῖν, Θεὸν δι’ ἐκείνας τὰς δυνάμεις ἔαυτὸν ἀναγορεύοντα. Origen. contra Celsum, lib. i. c. 38. p. 356. p. 30. ed. Spens. The meaning of which quotation is, that Celsus, though he owned that Jesus performed miracles, ascribed them to magic, affirming, that Jesus having been educated in Egypt had there learnt their art of doing wonders.

ⁱ Οἱ δὲ Ἰησοῦς—οὐλίγοις πρὸς τοῖς τριακοσίοις ἐνιαυτοῖς ὀνομάζεται, ἐργασάμενος παρ’ ὃν ἐξηχρόνον ἔργον οὐδὲν ἀκοῆς ἀξιον, εἰ μή τις οἴεται τὸν κυλλοὺς καὶ τυφλοὺς ιάσασθαι καὶ δαιμονῶντας ἐφορκίζειν, ἐν Βηθσαϊδᾷ καὶ ἐν Βηθανίᾳ ταῖς κώμαις, τῶν μεγίστων ἔργων εἶναι. Cyril contra Julianum, lib. vi. p. 191. Lipsiæ, 1696. Though Julian here speaks of the miracles of Jesus with the utmost contempt, he admits their truth.

champions against the gospel, in its earliest ages, had it not in their power to call in question the truth of the miracles of Jesus, how unreasonable would it be at our time of day to pretend that such detection was ever made ! Besides, had the charge of imposture been fixed upon the witnesses of these miracles, is it to be imagined that they could have made so much as one convert ? If, for instance, the truth of their Master's resurrection could have been overturned, is it to be imagined that, within fifty days after it was said to have happened, the discourse of St. Peter, in which this miracle was so strongly insisted upon, could have added three thousand to the faith. Had the miracles appealed to by the first preachers of Christianity been detected to be false, the same age and the same place, which saw this religion first preached, would have seen it forgotten in oblivion and contempt.

As, therefore, the miracles of Jesus did not escape detection from want of examination at their first publication, I here repeat, what I have aimed to prove, (I hope not altogether without success,) that they stand upon a stronger testimony than the spurious pretences which have been represented as vying with them. For though some of these, as I have granted, may, equally with those of the Gospels, be traced up to contemporary witnesses, and be allowed to have been published on the spot, yet I am confident that you cannot produce any one instance, amongst the endless catalogue of them, where it will not be easy, from the circumstances of the case, to satisfy you, that if the imposture escaped detection, it escaped it, because it was proposed to those who did not examine it, or was sheltered and protected

by those who had it in their power to prevent any examination.

But the protestant Christian is not warranted to admit the miracles recorded in his New Testament while he rejects those of a later date, merely because the former are better attested than the latter. His reasons for making the distinction will appear to still greater advantage, if I can prove, as I proposed, that the testimony which supports the miracles of the New Testament is not only stronger than that which supports any pretended wonders, but also the strongest that can be supposed, or that, from the nature of the thing, could be had.

Two qualifications must concur to establish the credibility of witnesses; a sufficient knowledge of the matters of fact they attest, and a disposition not to falsify what they know. And when these two qualifications do concur, we think ourselves obliged to admit what is attested as true.

Now, that the persons whose testimony we have for the miracles of Jesus had the first qualification, it would be impertinent in me to suppose that you can dispute. Let us then see whether they can be proved to have had the other qualification also; and I flatter myself that I shall be able to shew that they had it, and that, if ever there can be any assurance of the integrity of witnesses in any one instance, we have such an assurance with regard to the witnesses of the miracles of Jesus.

That any credit is paid to human testimony is in general owing to the knowledge we have of human nature, which is so constituted, that men cannot be supposed capable of giving a false attestation, when they are not under the influence of interested views

and selfish passions; much less when, by so doing, they contradict every interested motive of action. Now that the witnesses of the miracles of Jesus were in such circumstances, that they not only had no temptations to give a false attestation, but, on the contrary, were restrained by the strongest motives that can influence men from doing this, will, I think, appear, if we attend to the following obvious reflections.

Was their preaching of Christ, and bearing witness to his miracles, the road to greatness, and the means of rewards from the rulers of their nation? The reverse happens to be the case. Far from having this temptation, their testimony exposed them to every hardship that power could inflict, and to every distress that human nature could suffer. They had, but a little before, seen their Master crucified for assuming the character of a teacher from God. Is it, therefore, to be conceived, that had they known him to be an impostor, they would have ventured to back his pretensions, when they could not but expect to meet with his fate?

But perhaps love of fame, and ambition to be looked upon as the founders of a new sect, may be thought motives sufficient to account for their imposing upon the world. A supposition this most evidently groundless. The schemes of men, generally speaking, bear some reference to their station in life. Can it be imagined, therefore, that such a scheme of acquiring glory, by founding a new religion on the ruins of those established in the world, could ever enter the imaginations of persons in so mean a station of life as were the first preachers of Christianity?

Or, granting it possible, that while they were in their fishing-boats they might entertain the idea of making themselves famous by founding a religion, yet in fact we find that they gave this honour to another, assuming no higher character than that of his ministers and servants. To him, therefore, all the fame of founding the new religion was due. Should it be alleged, that, though they did not found the religion in their own names, the honour of being looked upon as the first ministers and favourites of a divine Teacher may account for their confederating to impose upon the world. In answer to this, I would beg you to reflect who the person was under whose banner they enlisted themselves, Jesus, reputed the son of a carpenter; a man obscure in his birth, and wretched throughout his life, which was closed by an ignominious death. Had they been impostors, and actuated by the love of fame, is it to be supposed that they would have chosen such a one for their Lord and Master? Would they have taken a leader from the accursed tree? Jesus crucified was to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness. If glory, therefore, was their aim, this could not be got by professing themselves his followers. The disciples could not expect to be in greater esteem than the Master; and if he was despised and rejected of men, they could not hope to be treated with distinction and honour.

Let us next see whether the prospect of appropriating to themselves the wealth of those whom they might convert can be supposed to have influenced them. Alas! what hopes could they have of any gain, by preaching, not to the high and mighty, but to the indigent and humble? Or admitting, what

undoubtedly happened, that there were persons possessed of considerable property amongst the believers in Jesus, yet so far were the apostles from having any lucrative views, that when the first converts sold their possessions, and brought them the money, they declined being concerned in the distribution of it; and deacons were appointed, who might have the charge of it, and minister to the wants of the poor.

Uninfluenced, as the witnesses of Jesus's miracles were, by the interested motives of reputation and honour, or by the more sordid views of gain, perhaps it will be said, that their aim was to gratify some favourite passion and irregular lust. And indeed religion has been but too frequently made a cloak to irregularities of every kind; and under the name of teachers from heaven, impostors have sanctified the vilest of crimes. But the known, the acknowledged purity of manners, and unblameable lives of the disciples of Jesus, leave no room for any suspicion of this kind. The bitterest enemies of Christianity, in the earliest ages, never could attack the moral characters of its publishers. Their doctrine breathed nothing but peace, but friendship, but piety, but benevolence; and their lives corresponded with their doctrine. Ye are witnesses, and God also, (could they say,) how holily, justly, and unblameably we have behaved ourselves amongst you that believed, *not handling the word of God craftily, but by manifestation of the truth commanding ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

In a word; let us examine our hearts: let us revolve in our minds every motive and spring of ac-

tion that human nature is liable to be influenced by; and we shall not be able to find out any one interested view which the apostles could have, in bearing witness to the miracles of Jesus. Shall we then say they bore witness to a lie, and that they were impostors? If they were, they must be owned to be the only impostors who have ever appeared who gained nothing, or could propose to gain nothing by their imposture.

But here perhaps you will urge to me the authority of the author of the Free Inquiry, who says that the integrity of a witness of miracles is to be suspected, “ if he had any favourite opinion to recommend “ by the authority of such works; because a preten-“ sion to miracles has, in all ages and nations, been “ found the most effectual instrument of impostors “ towards deluding the multitude, and gaining their “ ends upon them^k. ” Far be it from me to assert, that this general observation was meant to weaken the assurance which we have of the integrity of the first publishers of Christianity. However, as I know that in your opinion it does extend to their case, it becomes necessary for me to shew, that though the apostles had favourite opinions to recommend by the authority of their Master’s miracles, there is nevertheless not the least ground for a suspicion of their integrity as witnesses of them.

And, first, I would remark, that the opinions recommended by the apostles on the credit of Jesus’s miracles had not always been favourite ones with them. They were opinions which they, as professors of the Jewish religion, could not but have been at first highly prejudiced against. Their testimony,

^k Dr. Middleton’s Free Inquiry, p. 218.

therefore, to miracles confirming these opinions, is in effect the testimony of adversaries.

But secondly ; though it must be granted that men will go great lengths to recommend favourite opinions ; and though it is not to be denied that history furnishes us with instances of some who, in order to establish such opinions, have not scrupled to deceive the world by pretensions to miracles, though this, I say, must be granted, yet is it to be imagined that in all cases of this kind men will always go all lengths ? Common sense tells us they will not ; tells us that the conduct of men in this respect will vary according as circumstances vary ; and that while some situations may be so favourable as to encourage them to attempt an imposture, other situations may be supposed so unfavourable, as that any attempt of this kind would be the height of madness and folly. To apply this to the present argument.

Though history furnishes us with many instances of forged miracles, yet it is very remarkable that both amongst the pagans of old, and amongst Christians in later ages, the authors or encouragers of these impostures have been placed in such circumstances, that they had reason to fear no inconveniences on account of their testimony. They have not only thought themselves powerful enough to screen their forgeries from a detection ; but farther, in case of being detected, they were free from the apprehension of any punishment, because they had in their own hands, or at least under their own influence, the power of inflicting it. But very different were the circumstances under which the witnesses of the miracles of Jesus appealed to these works. Here the weak and unassisted were the publishers of the mi-

racles, and the strong and mighty, the rulers of the world, the opposers: here every opportunity and means of discovering any imposture was in the hands of those who were to be imposed upon, and the power of punishing; a power which we know was actually exercised with all the rage and violence of cruelty. For the Christian may challenge his adversary to produce, though he turn over every history of every nation, any one instance where the witnesses of any fact suffered in the manner the witnesses of the miracles of Jesus did, for the sake of what they attested. For as we have seen that no temptations of pleasure, or profit, or ambition, could influence them, so every view of interest was sacrificed by them; they not only gained nothing, but they lost every thing, on account of their testimony. Distress, misery, persecution of every kind, nay even death itself, dressed in its most frightful terrors, were their envied reward. And if this their behaviour in such circumstances cannot give us an assurance of their integrity, the credibility and integrity of witnesses can be discovered in no instance, and human testimony must be given up as entirely useless.

And now I am naturally led to consider the force of the argument in defence of the gospel miracles, drawn from the martyrdom of the eyewitnesses of them, against which it is common to hear from your quarter objections to this purpose, “ That there “ have been martyrs amongst the professors of what “ is called the false, as well as amongst the profes-“ sors of the true religion; that history presents us “ with instances of multitudes who have laid down “ their lives in testimony of the truth of the wildest

“systems of superstition; and that, therefore, a
“mark which may belong to any religion, however
“false, can never be a mark by which to prove Chris-
“tianity to be true.”

In answer to this, I would beg leave to observe, what I think cannot be denied, that when a person dies martyr to any religion, that he should renounce his life rather than renounce his opinion, proves absolutely that he was sincere, and believed his opinion to be right; at least no higher proof of sincerity can be given. But a man's believing his opinion to be true is no proof that it really is so. The Pagan, the Jew, the Mahometan, as well as the Christian, thinks himself in the right; and this is the effect of accidental, external circumstances, which give a bias to the mind. Whenever, therefore, our opinions have been determined by such accidental circumstances, then our martyrdom for them will prove nothing, but that we are sincere in believing principles to be true, which, notwithstanding, may be false.

But with regard to the apostles, we have almost an infallible assurance, that the opinions which they sealed with their blood were not the effect of accidental biasses on their minds, by means of which error is embraced as frequently as truth, but that they were founded on a rational conviction. They had all been bred up in the belief of notions widely different. Education, prejudice, enthusiasm, and indeed all the other causes which in the usual course of things concur in forming men's opinions, opposed their embracing the doctrines of the gospel. Their having embraced these doctrines cannot therefore be accounted for in the manner we account for the belief of erroneous opinions. How then can we account for their embracing

them? Only one way: we must admit, what they affirm to have been the case, that they were convinced by miracles; by the most stupendous works performed by Jesus, during the space of three or four years, works which stamped the authority of heaven on his words. So that their becoming Christians did not happen from trusting to their own fallible judgment, or that of others, but from believing their own senses.

The apostles, therefore, and witnesses of Jesus's miracles, if we would represent their case fairly, are not to be considered as dying for speculative opinions, which might be false, though they believed them to be true; but they are to be considered as witnesses of what they themselves had seen, as dying for the truth of matters of fact.

Now, though men may believe speculative opinions to be true which are false, yet is it scarcely to be conceived that they can ever so far deceive themselves, as to believe they saw facts which they did not really see. If ever this happened, it can be accounted for on no other principle than of the power of imagination, which often has strange effects on the perceptions of an enthusiastic or disordered brain¹. The enthusiast may possibly fancy he sees

¹ Tam stupenda autem est facultatis imaginandi vis, ut non minus falsæ quam veræ imagines afficiant, ubi mens iis assidue sit addicta. Omnibus notum est, quam mirabilibus modis in melancholicis mens perturbatur. Hic ex vitro caput sibi fictum putat, et, ne frangatur, foras prodire metuit. Ille se mortuum esse credit, et cum mortuis sine cibo debere versari. Talia sexcenta memorantur. Memini me novisse virum literatum, qui se in ventre infantem gestare affirmaret, de quo in lucem edendo valde sollicitus erat. Duos etiam vidi, qui, cum soli essent, voces sibi in aures loquentium audire putabant. Neque alia, ut

objects which no where exist, in the same manner as he is positive that he has conversations with God, and can mistake the wild rovings of his own fancy for impulses of the Divine Spirit. This, I say, may possibly happen, though I believe very few instances of it can be assigned; or if any instances at all can be assigned, they are of single persons, each deceived as to the existence of a different fact; not of any considerable number of persons, uniformly deceived as to the existence of the same facts. And therefore when so many persons, witnesses of the miracles of Jesus, agreed in the same testimony, we may be certain that the matter of their testimony must have had some external source or cause really existing, and operating, uniformly, on the senses of every one of them.

Besides, that they were not misled by enthusiasm, to fancy they had seen what never happened, is to be inferred from this consideration, that enthusiasm always acts in conformity to the favourite notions of the person who is heated by it, and, as an eminent writer expresses himself^m, “it can no more work “against them, than a rapid river can carry a boat “against its own stream.” How then can it be supposed that enthusiasm will account for the belief of the witnesses of the gospel miracles, when we can be opinor, conditio est illorum, qui larvas et spectra oculis cernere sibi persuadent. Sunt enim deliria quasi somnia vigilantium, et in utrisque pariter mens, pro natura specierum objectarum, diversimode corpus agitat. *Mead, Medica Sacra*, p. 71, 72.

^m See Observations on the Conversion of St. Paul; the solid arguments of which short but masterly performance, though drawn up so as to be personal to St. Paul, may, by a very small alteration, be applied to establish the characters of all the apostles and first preachers of Christianity.

certain that their imaginations were not, at least from the beginning, heated in favour of Christianity? That such persons should seal their testimony with their blood is the highest proof that can be given, not only that they sincerely believed what they attested, but that what they attested had really happened.

But there is still another objection to be taken notice of: "That the history of mankind abounds with instances of persons dying with a lie in their mouths: particularly the cases of malefactors, who, though certainly guilty of the facts laid to their charge, persist in denying them with their latest breath, are urged to shew, that though the witnesses of the miracles of Jesus sealed their testimony with their blood, this is no certain mark that what they attested was true." As an answer to this, I think there is not the least resemblance between a malefactor's denying his crime, and the publishers of Christianity asserting the truth of their Master's miracles in their last moments. A malefactor may think the confident denial of his crime a probable means of procuring a pardon; or, if he has no hopes of saving his life, shame and obstinacy may induce him to persist in declaring his innocence, as a confession of his guilt would not better his condition. Whereas the witnesses of the miracles of Jesus were brought to suffer for no other crime but their testimony, and had it in their power to escape their unhappy fate by retracting it. This, you will observe, makes a wide difference. Could you indeed produce instances of a number of malefactors who persist in denying their guilt, though a pardon be offered on condition of a confession of it, this would be

something to your purpose. But that ever any such instance has happened, or ever can happen, unless in the case of a disordered judgment, cannot be affirmed by any one who is in the least acquainted with the frame of human nature. And yet this must be affirmed by you, otherwise the last-mentioned objection is foreign to the purposeⁿ.

If what has been offered under this head do not satisfy you that the testimony for the miracles of Jesus is as strong as any testimony can be, I own I shall be at a loss to guess at any causes of your continuing unconvinced, consistent with your professions of being open to conviction.

But the miracles of Jesus are not the only ones on which Christianity is built. For the very same persons who gave such remarkable proofs of integrity as witnesses of them, claimed also to themselves a power of performing works equally miraculous. The pretended miracles which have sometimes been represented by unbelievers as on the same footing of credibility with those recorded in the New Testa-

ⁿ It may be proper just to hint, that the disparaging representation which Dr. Middleton gives us in his Free Inquiry, of the views and motives that influenced the martyrs of the primitive ages of Christianity, (a representation, by the by, as uncandid as it is satirical,) does not affect the force of the argument for the truth of the miracles of Jesus, drawn from the martyrdom of the apostles and other disciples, eyewitnesses of these miracles; nor from the martyrdom of the eyewitnesses of the miracles of the preachers of the gospel in the apostolic age. All these martyrs died attesting matters of fact which they themselves had seen: this could not be affirmed by the Doctor to be the case of the martyrs of the second and third centuries, who are the persons whose characters he places in so unfavourable a light. See the Free Inquiry, from p. 200 to 214.

ment, have generally been single facts, or at least facts related of one single person. Whereas it is not one miracle, nor the miracles of one person alone, that we urge, but a succession of miracles, carried on and performed, through a long tract of time, by different persons in different places, all cooperating towards the same end, the establishment of the religion taught by Jesus. Let us therefore now examine whether there be any defect in the evidence, on the strength of which we believe that the first preachers of Christianity, Jesus's disciples, and those whom they associated to themselves, were really vested with a supernatural power.

Now that after Jesus had been put to death in Juddæa, his disciples separated themselves throughout the wide extent of the Roman empire, preaching faith in their crucified Master, and assuming to themselves a power of working miracles as proofs of their being teachers from God, these are facts not only affirmed by the writer of their acts, himself an eyewitness and companion of some of them, but which appear also from their own Epistles, addressed to the converts whom they had made in different parts of the world.

Should you deny these writings to be genuine, and affirm them to be the production of a later age, (though he who would affirm this will never be able to prove it,) yet still a full assurance could be had that the disciples of Jesus really laid claim to miraculous powers, and that this claim was well known at the time, and in the very places when and where it is said to be made. For that Christianity was professed to be received in the world, upon the belief of miracles, or that its first converts alleged as the

motive of their conversion the miracles of its preachers, is a fact allowed, and which must be allowed, by every one who knows that Christianity was then preached. "And" (as is observed by one of the most powerful champions which the Gospel has had in this, or indeed in any age) "this their testimony is the same kind of evidence for those miracles, as if they had put it in writing, and these writings had come down to us. And it is real evidence, because it is of facts which they had capacity and full opportunity to inform themselves of. It is also distinct from the direct or express historical evidence, though it is of the same kind; and it would be allowed to be distinct in all cases. For were a fact expressly related by one or more ancient historians, and disputed in after-ages, that this fact is acknowledged to have been believed by great numbers of the age, in which the historian says it was done, would be allowed an additional proof of such fact, quite distinct from the express testimony of the historian^o." So that the conversion of so many, both Jews and Gentiles, to Christianity, in the time of the apostles, on the strength of miracles, is a proof that miracles were pretended to in that age, distinct from the testimony of the writer of the Acts of the Apostles, and of the writers of the Epistles, and would have been sufficient evidence of the fact, even although no contemporary historian had put it into writing.

The next consideration, therefore, which naturally presents itself, is, whether these pretensions to miracles of the first preachers of Christianity were ever detected to be false. That there never was any such detection, every impartial inquirer will conclude,

^o See the late Bishop Butler's *Analogy of Religion*, p. 355.

when he reflects that, if this had happened, it must have been handed down to us, and would have been so much improved by the enemies of the gospel, who had power, learning, and the prejudices of the people on their side, as must have checked its propagation for ever. But I decline enlarging on this argument, not only because what was offered with regard to the miracles of Jesus may be applied to those of his own disciples, but also because a modern unbeliever will hardly venture to affirm, what his predecessors in the earliest ages had it not in their power to do^p.

And as the miracles of the apostolical age never were detected to be impostures, let us next see whether such circumstances did not attend them, as prove that, had they been impostures, they could not have avoided a detection.

Consider then, first, the length of time during which this pretension to miracles was kept up. Now from the commencement of the ministry of the apostles to the death of St. John, who survived all the rest, a period of above threescore years elapsed. Is it then at all credible that a system of fraud should not have betrayed itself in less time than this? When miracles are the arts of the few to impose upon the many, this, of necessity, contracts the duration of the pretension to them; because frauds of long continuance cannot always keep in the same hands. In

^p Julian, speaking of St. Paul, calls him *τὸν πάντας πανταχοῦ τοὺς πώποτε γόγτας καὶ ἀπατεῶντας ὑπερβαλλόμενον Παῦλον.* Cyril contra Julianum, lib. iii. p. 100. Lipsiæ, 1696. One who excelled every other deceiver by tricks he performed through the power of magic. So that here is a confession of the facts, while they are vilified by ascribing them to a reproachful cause.

order to carry them on, there must be a succession of confederates ; and such a succession would produce a detection of the whole. Besides, as every repetition of an imposture endangers its credit, it is no inconsiderable proof that the miracles of the inspired publishers of Christianity were not impostures, since, though repeated for sixty years, their credit remained unshaken.

This receives additional weight, when we consider that these miracles were not confined to one particular spot, and to one particular set of witnesses ; but the scenes of them were laid in most of the great cities throughout the wide extent of the Roman empire. If the workers of them had remained fixed at Jerusalem, or if when they did preach the gospel at other places they had all moved thither in a body, such a situation might have enabled them to set a confederacy on foot ; and it might possibly have been alleged, that their pretension to miracles was backed by a party previously inclined, nay, interested to support them. But now all pretence for such a suspicion is cut off. The apostles, unlike to confederated impostors, did not keep in a body, to aid and support each other, but separated themselves to the different corners of the earth ; a conduct this, which, as it was necessary in order to propagate their religion, would have been the height of folly, had their religion been built on fraud and forgery. By separating in this manner, a scheme of fraud must have dwindled to nothing ; no regular plan could be pursued, no unity of design could have subsisted, no community of interests been preserved. In a word, this conduct renders the supposition of a confederacy absurd, because it put it out of their

own power to have any number of confederates. For they could not possibly meet with any party, in the cities where they first preached, inclined to support them. The inhabitants of Antioch, of Athens, of Corinth, or of any other of the places where the apostles preached, never heard of the name of Jesus before the miracles appealed to excited them to believe. To suppose a confederacy, therefore, in this case, would be to suppose it where there was an impossibility of having confederates.

If to the above reflections we add, that the same circumstances attended the miracles of the apostles among the Gentiles, which attended the miracles of Jesus among the Jews ; that those persons to whom they were proposed were neither biassed by a previous disposition of their own to admit them, nor restrained by any power lodged with the proposers from examining them ; but that, on the contrary, the apostles were as much opposed by the pagan priests and magistrates as their Master had been by those of the Jews^q ; if, I say, we take all this into

^q Many circumstances concurred to expose the imposture (had there been any) even among the Christians themselves. I. Jesus was betrayed by one of his own disciples, a bosom friend, who, had there been fraud, must have been privy to it, and had it in his power, by his confession of it, to stifle the whole. II. After our Saviour's death, the circumstances were equally inconsistent with imposture. A fraud carried on by a confederacy must be discovered when these confederates disagree. Now, in the same manner as we see Judas betraying Jesus, without accusing him of imposture, we perceive an infinity of disputes between the apostles and the first Christians, without calling in question the certainty of the facts on which Christianity was founded. St. Paul tells us how he and St. Peter disagreed. St. Luke relates the dispute between Paul and Barnabas, and the

our consideration, the conclusion will appear just to every impartial inquirer, that the apostolical miracles were neither screened by any confederacy, nor owed their credit to want of examination.

Having then shewn that the miracles recorded in the New Testament are supported by a testimony so full, so free from every defect, and that the circumstances under which they were published assure us so unquestionably of their truth, I own myself not a little surprised to see it asserted by the author of the *Essay on Miracles*, “That there is not to be “found, in all history, any miracle attested by a “sufficient number of men, of such unquestioned “good sense, education, and learning, as to secure “us against all delusion in themselves; of such un- “doubted integrity, as to place them beyond all sus- “pcion of any design to deceive others; of such “credit and reputation in the eyes of mankind, as “to have a great deal to lose in case of being de- “tected in any falsehood; and at the same time at- “testing facts performed in such a public manner, “and in so celebrated a part of the world, as to “render the detection unavoidable; all which cir-

quarrel about the distribution of alms to the widows of Greeks and Hebrews. We read also of a great contest amongst the apostles about the calling of the Gentiles, and the obstinacy of the Judaizing Christians, who would retain circumcision, which St. Paul so warmly opposes. Now, as it is absolutely impossible that an imposture should not be discovered, when there is discord amongst those who may be regarded as the contrivers of the fraud, there needs only to mention these early discords amongst the first preachers of the gospel, to prove that they acted not from any concert to propagate a lie, and that there was no confederacy to impose upon those to whom they addressed themselves.

"cumstances are requisite to give us a full assurance in the testimony of men."^r

However confidently this be asserted, from what I have offered it seems plain, that in every circumstance, really essential, the testimony for the miracles of the New Testament has the qualifications which this gentleman requires. Can he say that they are not attested by a sufficient number of witnesses? This cannot be affirmed with any justice; for we have seen that, independently of the testimony of the apostles themselves, every person converted to Christianity by its inspired publishers, may be supposed to be a witness of miracles performed by them. Will it be asserted then, that none of them had good sense, learning, and education enough to secure themselves from delusion? To give this character of the many thousands, converts to Christianity on the evidence of miracles, would be too wild an assertion. However, one would think that learning and education cannot be very necessary to make men adequate judges of matters of fact presented to their eyes; and that common sense was all that could be requisite in the witnesses of the gospel miracles to secure them from delusion. But perhaps they may be suspected of an intention to deceive others, and wanted integrity. What! can those persons be suspected of wanting integrity, who, as we have seen, far from gaining any thing by their testimony, were involved by it in every hardship and distress? Will he next say, that they were not of such credit and reputation in the eyes of men, as to have a great deal to lose, in case of being detected in any falsehood?

^r Philosophical Essays, p. 183.

To this I would answer, that the witnesses of the New Testament miracles, though you represent them in as despicable a light as you please, with regard to credit and reputation in the eyes of the world, yet had a great deal to lose: they could suffer pain, they could smart under scourges, they could feel the restraints of imprisonment, they could bleed under the hands of the executioner. Surely they who had their lives to lose, and actually lost them, must be owned to lose a great deal. Or, lastly, will this gentleman say that the gospel miracles were not performed in so public a manner, and in so celebrated a part of the world, as to render a detection unavoidable? If he can assert this, or if you, after what I have collected on this point, should concur in the assertion, I shall then sit down, and despair of convincing you: I shall look upon you as being determined against conviction.

I shall only add, that as the testimony for the miracles of the New Testament has been proved to have all the circumstances which this great champion against the miracles in general thinks requisite to give a full assurance in the testimony of man, I hope that I have sufficiently established their credibility; especially as I attempted, and I hope not unsuccessfully, in the beginning of this treatise, to answer that reasoning of the same gentleman, which would make the miraculous nature of a fact to be a demonstration of its impossibility.

Though your patience has, by this time, been sufficiently tried, yet as the importance of my subject requires that nothing should be omitted which may strengthen my argument, I must beg the continuance of your attention, while I go through the

last head which I proposed to treat of, and attempt to prove,

That, besides the unexceptionable proof from testimony, the credibility of the gospel miracles is confirmed to us by collateral evidences of the most striking nature, and which no spurious miracles can boast of.

The first circumstance which I shall mention, as a collateral evidence of the reality of the gospel miracles, and as adding weight to the testimony by which they are supported, is the great change introduced into the state of religion by the first preachers of Christianity^s.

Indeed this point has been so frequently and so well handled, and extended so amply through all its branches, especially in the noble discourses of bishop Atterbury, and in the accurate performance of Mr. West, that it would be entirely unnecessary to enlarge upon it here. It will suffice, therefore, to observe, that unless we believe the first publishers of Christianity to have been vested with miraculous powers, thereby commanding attention and proving their divine mission, it would be impossible to assign any one cause adequate to the establishment of the religion of Jesus on the ruins of pagan superstition. Once divest them of the power of working

^s False miracles have had no consequences: like meteors they have blazed, and all again was darkness. They have produced no effects to convince posterity that they had their force. But every thing is the reverse with regard to the Christian miracles; the greatest event of which history can boast was produced by them; the empire of idolatry and superstition was overthrown, and a change introduced into the world not otherwise to be accounted for, than by admitting the truth of the miracles.

miracles, which we ascribe to them, and we shall not be able to comprehend how they could gain so much as one convert to their religion. Every difficulty and discouragement that can be imagined opposed the propagation of the gospel. Whether we consider who its publishers were, men in the lowest stations of life, without riches to bribe, authority to awe, reputation to influence, learning to confute, or eloquence to persuade those to whom they addressed themselves; or whether we consider what they had to struggle with, the power of the civil magistrates, the influence of the priests of the established religions, and the prejudices of every hearer; in any of these views, the establishment of Christianity, unless we admit the reality of the miracles laid claim to, must be looked upon to have been morally impossible. Sooner could the inconsiderable number of Christian preachers have conquered the Roman empire without arms, than extended their religion without miracles. Rob them of this weapon, and we are confounded at the execution they did. But once suppose them thus fitted for the combat, and the victories which they gained will appear to be no more than what might naturally be expected. Then shall we comprehend how Christianity should spread itself with such rapidity; how men should be so eager in embracing it, though they were sure also of embracing misery and persecution; and how so many converts should be added to the church, amidst the groans of expiring martyrs.

But as I am sensible that I propose arguments to one who will make them pass strictly in review before him, I cannot dismiss the present one, without obviating what you will perhaps object against its

being conclusive. It may be urged, then, in order to weaken this argument, drawn from the effect which the miracles of Jesus and his apostles had, that many who must have seen them were not convinced by them; that Jesus, far from converting the bulk of the Jews, was put to death by them, and that the apostles and first preachers of the gospel to the Gentiles met with the same fate.

In opposition to this objection, I beg leave to observe, that if it has any weight at all, it will prove this, that the same evidence must appear with the same degree of strength to every understanding; the impossibility of which results from the very frame of our nature. Education, prejudice, principles diversely espoused, different capacities, and different ways of thinking, all these are so many causes which will necessarily make men to be differently affected with transactions to which they are witnesses. Not that I would affirm that a man's particular bias of mind can ever so far influence him as to make him distrust his senses, provided his senses be under the government of his reason, and induce him to dispute the reality of a fact which he himself saw. My meaning is, that a man's prejudices may induce him to resist the consequences which arise from this fact; may induce him not to pay that regard to it which he ought, to put the worst construction on it, and to cast about for ways of explaining it away. And in this manner it is easy to give the reasons why so many Jews and Gentiles were not converted to Christianity, though they were convinced of the reality of the miraculous facts ascribed to Jesus and his apostles.

That both Jews and Gentiles could not but be

averse to admit the claim of the publishers of Christianity to be teachers from God, is a point which will not be disputed by any one, who recollects that the declared end of this new religion was to abolish the Jewish law on the one hand, and the pagan superstition on the other. Prepossessed, therefore, against the doctrines which these miracles were designed to confirm, no wonder that many who were spectators of them should refuse to admit them as proofs that the performers of them were teachers from God, and have recourse to the inexplicable operation of magic, or to the absurd interposition of Beelzebub, prince of the devils, to account for them. So that the rejection of the gospel miracles by so many Jews and Gentiles, spectators of them, cannot be urged as a proof that the miracles were false ; it can only prove that many, through their prejudices, ascribed them to wrong causes. Add to this, that an immoral practice, fear of temporal inconvenience, nay, even mere want of attention, might operate as so many impediments to a conversion to Christianity, on many who could not call in doubt the reality of the miracles appealed to.

The rejection of the gospel miracles by some does not, then, at all invalidate the presumption we have of their truth, drawn from the effect which we know they had upon other witnesses of them. That vast multitudes, both Jews and Gentiles, should be converted to Christianity, cannot be accounted for, without supposing the truth of the miracles ; and that all were not converted, could not but happen, whether we consider the general frame of human nature, or attend to the particular impediments which I have pointed out.

I come now to consider a second collateral proof of the reality of the gospel miracles.

A power of working miracles is only one species of Divine assistance, and men may, in other instances, be under a supernatural influence. As therefore the supposed incredibility of a Divine assistance, in general, is the chief reason why the absolute incredibility of this particular kind of Divine assistance, the working of miracles, is asserted, I cannot take a more effectual way to satisfy you of the truth of the miracles ascribed to the first publishers of Christianity, than to shew that God was with them in other instances.

And, first, that Jesus and his apostles were not without a Divine influence with regard to what they taught ; or, in other words, that they could not have been the authors of such a religion, unless they had been instructed from above, will appear a very just conclusion from the following reflections.

Who, then, were the persons who introduced the Christian religion into the world ? Men, whose country, whose education, whose station in life, incapacitated them from polishing or improving any abilities, which they might have from nature, by the helps of learning and science. Jesus, the son of a carpenter, and twelve illiterate fishermen, publicans, and mechanics, do not promise great matters, when they take upon themselves to commence teachers of religion, to treat of the abstruse points relating to a Deity and Providence, and of the important obligations of morality.

Great, therefore, must be our surprise to find, upon looking into the books which contain their precepts and doctrines, such a view given of God

as approves itself to right reason ; such methods of worship prescribed, and such terms of acceptance proposed, as are most worthy of God to require ; such a scheme of conduct in life enjoined towards those connected with us, as is most useful to the public, and conducive to our own private felicity ; and such motives to obedience urged, as are most effectual to operate on men of every temper. In a word, to see their writings filled with the most noble reflections, and with sentiments that do honour to human nature^t.

^t Here it may be objected, “ that I have given a partial view of the religion taught in the New Testament, part of which, it may be said, far from being agreeable to right reason, is mysterious, and incomprehensible by us.” The truth of this is acknowledged ; but it does not in the least affect my argument. If we met with a book, the greatest part of which was in a language we understood, while some few pages of it were in an unknown tongue, on a supposition that the bulk of the book, which we understand, contained nothing but what is reasonable, we should have sufficient grounds for believing that the same vein of good sense runs through those places which we do not understand, as the same hand was the author of both. This is extremely applicable to the Christian religion. It is a scheme imperfectly understood : what we understand of it, which is by far the greater part, is wise, reasonable, and beneficial. If then what we do not comprehend come (as it certainly does) from the same persons who taught the rest, we have sufficient grounds for believing that the whole scheme, even in those parts of it which are incomprehensible by us, is agreeable to right reason. For a doctrine may be above reason, without being contrary to it ; and what is incomprehensible by men, may to more exalted understandings be plain and intelligible. And as there are some such doctrines contained in the New Testament, so can we give a very satisfactory account why they are there. For the Christian revelation does not enlarge the faculties of the human mind ; it only proposes truths which were unknown before. Now, as

Should it be said, that all these are points discoverable by human reason, and, consequently, that the publishers of Christianity might have taught them without being supernaturally instructed; I would desire you to reflect, that we can have no other rule of judging what is discoverable by human reason, but by observing what discoveries human reason has actually made; and what the unassisted faculties of man have ever been able to do, in planning a system of religion and rule of life.

And here I will not urge the extravagancies of uncultivated reason, the errors of ignorance, and the absurdities of superstition, in the dark corners of the earth, but, to give the argument its full force, would desire you to consider how little men of the most exalted genius, in the most enlightened ages of the pagan world, could ever do; how imperfect, not to say irrational, their notions of the Divine nature; how faulty and immoral their opinions of human duty; and how wild and indigested their ideas of the invisible world.

If then a Socrates, a Plato, an Aristotle, and a Tully, failed in their attempts to lay down a perfect and consistent scheme of religion and morality, how can we account for the superiority so visible in the

many truths relating to the infinite Creator and Governor of the universe must necessarily seem paradoxes to our limited understandings, it is not at all surprising that there should be mysteries in Christianity not to be fathomed by our reason. Such points could not but be mentioned in a divine revelation prescribing a rule of faith; but till our faculties be enlarged in a future state, it will be impossible for us to have any adequate notions of them. If they be revealed, this is enough to satisfy us that they are true; as to the manner of their being true, nothing being revealed, nothing can be known.

writings of the authors of the New Testament? Nothing is left for us, but either to affirm that the illiterate publishers of Christianity were better qualified to set up for teachers of mankind, than the philosophers of Greece or Rome, who had learnt from instruction and science all that great abilities could learn; or, if this be too absurd, (as it indisputably is,) we must allow that they could not have taught so perfect a scheme of religion and morality as they did, had not the darkness of their natural faculties been removed by the inspiration and influence of the Divine Being.

I know not well what can be offered to invalidate this argument, unless it be objected that many of the most important articles of belief and practice, which we receive on the authority of the gospel revelation, have been demonstrated and delineated on principles of mere reason. But with regard to this I would beg leave to observe, that there is a wide difference between proving a doctrine to be agreeable to reason after its certainty is once known, and discovering its agreeableness to reason before we have any notion of its certainty. Though every one is not capable of discovering a proposition in geometry, every one will readily assent to it after it is demonstrated. In like manner, though human reason may not be capable of discovering the great truths revealed in the gospel, yet these truths may be so agreeable to, and so well connected with other truths, which are obvious to reason, that whenever they are proposed to us we may be enabled to discover this connexion, which would otherwise have escaped us. And this is, in fact, the case. Those learned men, who since the appearance of Christi-

anity have deduced all the great principles of natural religion from reason, knew previously from revelation the certainty of the doctrines which they treated of ; and a Cumberland, a Clarke, or a Wollaston, would scarcely have succeeded better than Plato or Cicero had done before, if they had not borrowed lights from that revelation which they were so happy as to be acquainted with.

As therefore there is the greatest reason for believing that Jesus and his apostles were supernaturally assisted, so far as relates to the rule of duty and system of religion which they taught, why should it be thought incredible that they should be supernaturally assisted in another respect, and enabled to work miracles ? If there was a Divine interposition in the former case, there cannot be the least reason for withholding our belief that there was one in the latter, since we have all the evidence for the fact that the nature of it can admit of—unexceptionable testimony.

But lest the above argument, drawn from the perfection of the religion taught by Jesus, should not be thought conclusive, suffer me to add another, which in a manner demonstrates the certainty of his acting under a supernatural influence.

I have here, in my view, his prophecies recorded in the Gospels. There we may observe his foretelling that he was to be betrayed by Judas, and denied thrice by Peter ; that he was to suffer by a violent death, and to be restored to life on the third day ; and that his apostles were to meet with the most cruel persecution, and to lose their lives on account of the religion which he appointed them to publish

to the world. Besides these, and others which might be mentioned, we have a most remarkable prediction of what was to happen to Jerusalem and the Jewish nation, related very circumstantially by three of the Evangelists, Matth. ch. xxiv. Mark, ch. xiii. Luke, ch. xxi. It consists of many different parts, each of which may be considered as a distinct prophecy. Many very extraordinary occurrences, nay prodigies, that were to precede the principal event foretold, are particularly enumerated ; the remarkable circumstances attending the siege of Jerusalem ; the extremities to which the besieged were to be reduced ; the uncommon severity of the besiegers, who were to ruin the city, and not to leave one stone upon another of the temple ; and the singular fate of the Jews, who were to be led captives into every nation : all these particulars are clearly mentioned by Jesus, and history furnishes the most satisfactory proofs that they have been completely verified ^u. He therefore who can

^u The reader who would see how remarkably this prediction agrees with the events related by the historians, will receive full satisfaction from a perusal of archbishop Tillotson's sermons on the subject, where he will observe the several particulars predicted of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the forerunning events connected with it, corroborated by the express testimonies of Dion Cassius, Tacitus, Josephus, and other historians. See also Bishop Pearce's Analysis of the Prophecy in Dr. Jortin's Remarks on Ecclesiastical History. We need not refer to the testimony of history, to know whether the Jews have been led captives into all nations, as our Saviour foretold ; for the present situation of that reprobated nation is as well known as it is wonderful ; and whoever would see the argument which may be drawn from it in confirmation of Christianity placed in the strongest light, will read with pleasure the French author of the *Principes de la Foi Chrétienne*, as quoted by Mr. West,

suppose that so many distant connected events could be foreseen without the gift of prophecy, must, to be consistent with himself, allow it to be possible that the fortuitous dashes of a pencil could produce a number of regular figures in an historical picture ^x.

Since then we can be at a certainty that Jesus was supernaturally assisted in this instance, of foretelling future contingencies, why should we refuse to believe, upon unexceptionable testimony, that he was supernaturally assisted in another instance, that

p. 395—409. The learned (though almost forgotten) Dr. Jackson's collections, relating to the state of the Jews, compared with the prophecies concerning them, also greatly deserve to be consulted.

^x Some figurative particulars mentioned in this prediction have given rise to an opinion, that a prediction of the destruction of the world is interwoven with that of the destruction of Jerusalem; but the favourers of such an opinion would do well to consider, how they can reconcile it to the plain declaration of our Saviour, who adds, *Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled.* Accordingly Dr. Hammond explains these figurative particulars in such a manner, as shews that they had a real completion at the destruction of Jerusalem: and if the reader will turn to sir Isaac Newton's chapter on the Prophetic Language of Scripture, in his observations on Daniel, he will be satisfied that such an interpretation of them is far from being forced and unnatural. However, if any one should be of opinion that the destruction of Jerusalem is predicted in such terms as are typical of the destruction of the world, I shall not be averse to subscribe to it; and shall only observe, that Christ's coming to take vengeance on the Jews, and his coming to judge the world, seem to have been thought by the primitive Christians as one and the same event; a plain proof this of the genuineness of the prediction in question, which must have been in their hands before Jerusalem was destroyed, otherwise they could never have entertained an opinion, which those who lived after that event must have seen to be groundless.

of working of miracles ? I need scarcely add, that this collateral evidence is peculiar to the scripture miracles ; for that any of the pretended wonder-workers, whose exploits have been so much boasted of, were vested with the gift of prophecy, cannot be affirmed.

I come now to a third collateral proof of the genuineness of the miracles admitted by the protestant Christian. And as this shall be my last argument, so do I think it a most important one.

Whether we confine ourselves to the miracles of the New Testament, or extend our consideration to those of the Old, which we equally admit, we shall constantly, and without any exception, find, that all those persons who are there said to have performed miracles assumed the character of prophets or teachers sent from God ; and that their miracles were intended as credentials, to establish their claim, to add authority to the messages which they delivered and to the law which they taught. This is not more remarkably true of Jesus and his disciples, than it is of Moses and his successors, the Jewish prophets : and after using the best means of information, I think myself warranted to believe it to be equally true, that none of those persons amongst the papists to whom miracles have been ascribed, even laid claim to such a Divine mission as that by which the workers of the scripture miracles are distinguished : and that their not having laid claim to this character, of teachers from Heaven, will greatly strengthen the objections I have urged against the credibility of the miracles reported to have been wrought by them, will perhaps appear to be a fair conclusion, if we attend to the following observations y.

y It may not be improper to observe here, that though the

The laws established in the universe, or in other words, the course of nature, may be altered either by God's invisible agency, or by the visible agency of men, made use of as his instruments, and vested with powers for this purpose. Now though we may be certain that God will never reverse the course of nature but for important ends, (the course of nature being the plan of government laid down by himself,) infinite wisdom may see ends highly worthy of a miraculous interposition, the importance of which may lie hid from our shallow comprehension. Were, therefore, the miracles about the credibility of which we now dispute events brought about by invisible agency, though our being able to discover an important end served by a miracle would be no weak additional motive to our believing it; yet our not being able to discover any such end could be no motive to induce us to reject it, if the testimony produced to confirm it be unexceptionable.

But the miracles about which we are principally concerned are miracles ascribed to the visible agency of men, with regard to which the case is widely different. For if in a matter of this kind human reason can arrive at any certainty, there seems sufficient foundation for asserting that God never will vest men with a power of working miracles, unless such power be vested in them for this one end, to satisfy the world that they are really under a supernatural influence, and are to be looked upon as teachers from Heaven. That this end is of the highest importance,

grand impostor who founded the Mahometan religion assumed the character of a prophet or teacher sent from God, yet it is well known that he expressly disclaimed all power of working miracles. See his Life by Dr. Prideaux, p. 25, 26.

our reason enables us to discover; and I have already observed to you^z, that miracles are the best credentials to gain reception to any thing published in the name of the Supreme Being. But every other end that God can propose to serve by miracles, it should seem, may be effected without having recourse to the instrumentality of human agents. Whether his moral government be to be vindicated, his supremacy to be asserted, calamities to be inflicted upon, or happiness communicated to societies or individuals; or if, besides these, miraculous interpositions be requisite for any other providential end, all this may be effected by God's invisible agency, without calling in the visible agency of men, and vesting them with power to perform the events.

Now, may we not suppose that God will not make use of men as his instruments in reversing the laws of nature, when the ends of his miraculous interposition may be effected by his own invisible agency? For the same arguments by which we are enabled to discover the wisdom of the Deity lead us to this conclusion, that in his operations he will always act in the most simple and regular way, without making use of unnecessary, superfluous means.

This consideration places the scripture miracles, and particularly those of Jesus and his apostles, on a peculiar footing of credibility. They were performed for the express purpose of confirming the truth of a character which the workers of them assumed, that of being revealers of the will of God. This is a circumstance that must add greatly to the weight of the testimony supporting them; if, as I

^z See above, p. 24—27.

hope, I have assigned substantial reasons for believing that the only end of enabling men to work miracles is to prove their Divine mission, and that of all those to whom such supernatural power has been ascribed, none ever assumed the character of teachers from the true God, except those persons whose miracles are related in the scriptures ; I say the true God, any claim of a pagan wonder-worker to a mission, from the false objects of adoration, being only a fresh instance of imposture.

But perhaps it will be alleged, that the miracles ascribed to the agency of the Romish saints have this qualification, and were performed for the very same purposes that were proposed by the miracles of Jesus and his apostles, the confirmation of doctrines looked upon to be essential to Christianity.

Nothing can be farther from the truth than this assertion. Jesus and his apostles, we are certain, assumed the character of Divine teachers, and expressly declared, that their works were credentials of the character assumed. But so far is this from being the case of any of the Romish saints, that I think I may safely challenge their admirers to produce any writings of any of them, in which a power of working miracles is claimed, much less can they instance any one of them, who pretended ever to have received any doctrines from Heaven, which he might confirm by miracles. The Romish church derives, as we do, all its doctrines from the inspired publishers of Christianity, and asserts that they have been handed down to them, either authorized by the scriptures, or warranted by tradition. None of the pretences to miracles, therefore, amongst them, can be otherwise urged as proofs of their doc-

trines, than as they are ascribed to persons who were believers of these doctrines, supposed to have been already revealed.

But still it may be urged, that though the Romish miracle-workers have never assumed the character of Divine teachers, it was highly expedient they should be vested with such a power, in order to prove the truth of their interpretations of the scriptures, in opposition to protestants and other heretics. Neither will this pretence serve their cause. For we defy them to produce an instance of a saint who ever declared that he was vested with a miraculous power for such an end. Besides, most of their famous wonder-workers lived before the reformation, when as yet nobody disputed their interpretations of the scriptures, or the authenticity of their traditions. And those few who have had the honour of miracles attributed to them since the reformation, (for instances of miracle-working seem, since that famous period, to diminish among papists, in proportion as instances of witchcraft have diminished amongst us,) have not performed their miracles under such circumstances as could be of service in converting heretics. The scenes of them have been always amongst themselves; and none have ever had it in their power to examine into the evidences of them, but those very persons whom we have reason either to charge with credulity or to suspect of fraud. If Heaven, therefore, had vested the Romish saints with miraculous powers, to prove the doctrines of their church to be genuine, we may be certain that they would have been directed to exercise these powers at places where these doctrines were not believed, and in presence of those whom

it was intended to convert to the faith. Let then the papists abstain, if they have any modesty, from boasting of the truth of their church from the glory of miracles, till they can send into an heretical country missionaries vested with such a power, and asserting to themselves the character of ambassadors from God, to confirm popery.

I shall only add, that as it is an indisputable fact that the Romish missionaries, preaching in the Indies, do not pretend to be vested with a power of working miracles, to confirm Christianity to pagans, this one consideration is enough to satisfy any reasonable man, that none of the heroes of the Breviary were vested with such a power, to confirm popery to papists.

Though I have now extended this treatise to a much greater length than I proposed at first, I cannot conclude without making some observations upon the late controversy about the miracles of the primitive ages of the church, maintained on the one hand by Dr. Middleton, and on the other by an almost endless number of his brethren the clergy; a controversy which, though carried on by persons professing Christianity, has nevertheless greatly interested the enemies of Christianity, by the manner in which it has been conducted; and as it has furnished you, in particular, with many of the objections which I have attempted to answer, I could not pass it over unremarked upon, without leaving my subject unfinished.

In order then to form a true judgment of this dispute, it will be necessary to call to mind the distinction lately mentioned by me, that miracles are of two sorts, either events brought about by God's im-

mediate, invisible interposition, or works performed by the agency of men made use of as his instruments ; and to apply this to the question before us.

Now it is to be observed, that the controversy does not at all relate to miracles of invisible agency. Had Dr. Middleton maintained that there have been no such interpositions of Providence since the publication of the gospel, he could have been easily refuted. For some such interpositions may be clearly traced in the early ages of the church, so strongly attested as to leave us no room for doubting of their having happened. In particular, he who can suppose that the vast multitudes of Christian martyrs during the persecutions of the three first centuries ^a, whose firmness and intrepidity amazed,

^a The persecution under the emperor Decius, about the year 250, described as follows by Dr. Cave, will give the reader a just idea of the rest. “ Persecuting the Christians was the debate of all public councils, and the great care of the magistrates, which did not vent itself in a few threatenings and hard words, but in studying methods of cruelty, and instruments of torments, the very apprehension whereof is dreadful and amazing to human nature : swords and axes, fire, wild beasts, stakes, and engines to stretch and distend the limbs ; iron chairs made red hot, frames of timber set up straight, in which the bodies of the tormented, as they stood, were raked with nails that tore off the flesh ; and innumerable other arts daily invented, every great man being careful that another should not seem to be more fierce and cruel than himself. Some came as informers, others as witnesses ; some searched all private corners, others seized upon them that fled, and some who gaped for their neighbours’ estates took hold of the opportunity to accuse and persecute them for being Christians. So that there was a general confusion and consternation, every man being afraid of his nearest relatives, the father not consulting the safety of his child, nor the child regarding its duty to its parents ; the Gentile son betraying his Christian father,

nay even wearied out their inhuman persecutors, and whose behaviour under all the variety of sufferings and torments, on account of their religion, was so superior to the utmost efforts of human nature in the usual course of things ; he, I say, who can suppose that this venerable host of holy confessors could have braved death with a fortitude so uncommon, if God had not, by his invisible agency, interposed to comfort and strengthen their minds under such distress, will believe a miracle greater than any of those to which we Christians appeal. But such personal assistances, however certain the persons to whom they were granted might be of their reality, are of a nature incapable of being supported by testimony, and consequently, properly speaking, not miraculous ; to us, at least, it cannot be made to appear so. There are, however, other instances of interpositions of Heaven, by invisible agency, capable of being proved by testimony, to be met with in the writers of the primitive ages, which seem to have

“ and the infidel father accusing his son for embracing Christianity ; and the brother accounting it a piece of piety to violate the laws of nature in the cause of religion, and to condemn his own brother because a Christian. By these means the woods became full, and the cities empty ; and yet no sooner were many houses rid of their proper owners, but they were turned into common gaols, the public prisons not being able to contain the multitudes of Christians that were sent to them. You could not go into the markets, or places of usual course, but you might have seen some apprehended, others led to trial or execution ; some weeping, others laughing and rejoicing at the common misery ; no regard had to age or sex, or virtue or merit ; but as in a city stormed by a proud and potent conqueror, every thing was without mercy exposed to the rage and rudeness of a barbarous and inhuman enemy.”

Cave's Lives of the Fathers ; Life of St. Gregory.

all the marks of truth that testimony can give to matters of fact. And, not to mention any others, that Julian's attempt to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem was defeated by a signal interposition of Providence, appears to be highly credible, when we recollect our Saviour's prophecy, that not one stone should be left upon another of that edifice^b.

But it was not Dr. Middleton's design to inquire into the incredibility or credibility of such miracles as these. And his Free Inquiry is not, whether any miracles were performed after the times of the apostles, but whether, after that period, miraculous powers subsisted in the church; not whether God interposed at all, but whether he interposed by making use of men as his instruments^c.

^b See Bishop Warburton's Julian, a book written with a solidity of argument which might always have been expected from him, and with a spirit of candour which his enemies thought him incapable of till now.

^c Dr. Middleton's opinion is best expressed in his own words: "The position which I affirm is, that after the days of the apostles, no standing power of working miracles was continued to the church, to which they might perpetually appeal, for the conviction of unbelievers. This is what the title of my work implies; what my whole reasoning turns upon; and what I have often signified in the course of it to be my precise meaning. Yet all my antagonists treat my argument as if it absolutely rejected every thing of a miraculous kind, whether wrought within the church by the agency of men, or on any other occasion by the immediate hand of God. That God can work miracles whenever he pleases, nobody, I dare say, will deny; but whether he has wrought any or not, since the days of the apostles, is an inquiry which I do not at all enter into; the single point which I maintain is, that the church had no standing power of working any." *Vindication of the Free Inquiry*, p. 32, 33.

The decision of the question thus stated, whether we hold the negative with Dr. Middleton, or the affirmative with Drs. Dodwell and Church, is a matter of the utmost indifference to the cause of Christianity. Our faith is not built on the foundation of the fathers, but on that of Jesus and his apostles. And therefore, though the miraculous powers mentioned by the former to have subsisted in their age should be doubted of, nay given up, no sincere Christian need be alarmed at such a concession, if at the same time it be shewn, that the reasons for making it will not in the least affect the miracles recorded in the New Testament, and that, whatever becomes of other pretensions, these will remain unshaken.

One of Dr. Middleton's antagonists has indeed asserted, "that if all miracles after the days of the apostles, attested unanimously by the primitive fathers, are no better than enthusiasm, cheat, and imposture, then we are deprived of our evidence for the truth of the gospel miracles, and Christianity may be called in question^d." Could this assertion be well supported, I own that, far from its being a matter of indifference whether we believe or reject the miracles of the fathers, those of the gospel must stand or fall with them. But I am confident that every one who has examined the question before us with any accuracy will be of a very different opinion, and will find reason to subscribe to that of a writer well known in our church, "that the miracles of the fathers may be rejected without any mischief, and yet the miracles of the apostles and

^d Preface to Jackson's Remarks on the Free Inquiry.

“ of their Master may be maintained as true and
“ certain^e.”

But the judgment of one who never professed himself an advocate for the miracles of the fathers, is less to our present purpose than the judgment of their express champions. Dr. Berriman, who can digest the wild, ridiculous miracles of the fourth and fifth centuries, those ages of credulity and superstition, says, “ that these cannot be discredited without rejecting all accounts of miracles, except those “ of the scriptures^f;” by which exception he expressly allows that the scripture miracles stand upon a surer footing of credibility, and would remain unshaken, though all the rest were discredited. Another learned divine, the first who entered the lists against Dr. Middleton, by answering his Introductory Discourse, concurs in the same opinion, when he tells us, that “ if not so much as one “ true miracle could be found after the days of the “ apostles, the foundations of Christianity would be “ equally secure^g.”

Though I cannot recollect any such explicit declaration of Dr. Dodwell, yet I find Dr. Church telling us, “ that the miracles recorded in the holy “ scriptures must be owned to be a sufficient foundation of the Christian faith, though we had no “ accounts at all of any subsequent ones, or none “ which we could vindicate and approve^h.” Nay,

^e Two Questions previous to Dr. Middleton’s Free Inquiry, p. 94.

^f Sermons at Lady Moyer’s Lectures, p. 327.

^g Observations on Dr. Middleton’s Introductory Discourse, p. 30; supposed to be written by Dr. Stebbing.

^h Vindication of the Miraculous Powers, &c. p. 15.

farther, which is extremely remarkable, he observes, " that the scripture miracles are related more circumstantially than most of those of the primitive church. We are told, not only that they were wrought, but where, on whom, and before whom they were wrought. And this I own and willingly allow to be a considerable advantage, and such as gives them a superiority and preeminence above all others. Yet still, will our want of knowing the names of the persons who received benefit from miracles, and the circumstances of place, company, &c. destroy their credit? No, surely. There are different degrees of probability. The accounts of the ancient fathers may be and are sufficiently satisfactory, and worthy of our belief, though they do not carry with them the selfsame very clear and convincing proofs of their truth which the relations of the evangelists do.ⁱ"

From all these quotations, then, you see that it is a point about which Christians (even those who are the most sanguine opposers of Dr. Middleton's opinion) are pretty well agreed, that the miracles of the fathers do not carry with them the same very clear and convincing proofs of their truth which the relations of the evangelists do. So that, I again repeat it, even upon the principles of these gentlemen themselves, all that Dr. Middleton contends for may be admitted, and yet the credibility of the miracles recorded in the New Testament will remain unshaken.

Whether the same arguments which led Dr. Berriman, the author of the *Observations*, and Dr. Church,

ⁱ *Vindication of the Miraculous Powers, &c.* p. 87.

to allow that the miracles recorded by the fathers do not stand upon the same footing of credibility with those of the evangelists, ought not also to have led them to reject them altogether, is a consideration I shall not meddle with. But thus much I cannot help observing, in order to be consistent with myself, and with the principles I have laid down in this Treatise, that the miraculous powers mentioned by the writers of the second and third centuries, are apparently liable to some of the objections which I have urged as grounds for our disbelieving the spurious pretensions of popery; and that most, if not all these objections, are applicable, in their full force, to the miracles of the fourth and fifth age. To be particular upon this head would lead me to a repetition of what has been so copiously insisted upon by Dr. Middleton and his answerers. Suffer me, therefore, just to observe, that though our not knowing on whom, or by whom, or before whom, the miracles recorded by the fathers of the second and third centuries were wrought, should be allowed not to destroy their credit, (though this is a concession very few will make to Dr. Church,) yet the facts appealed to are of so ambiguous a kind, that, granting they did happen, it will remain to be decided, by a consideration of the circumstances attending the performance of them, whether there was any miracle in the case or no. For if we except the testimonies of Papias and Irenæus, who speak of the raising the dead, (and what I shall suggest in the note will serve to prove that their testimony is foreign to the present question^k,) I can

^k The point in dispute is, whether miraculous powers were continued in the church after the apostles. Papias is quoted as

find no instances of miracles mentioned by the fathers before the fourth century, as what were performed by

saying that a dead person had been raised in his age. But what can this prove, when it is a known fact, that Papias was contemporary with, if not a disciple of some of the apostles, and consequently lived at a time when both parties are agreed miraculous powers did subsist? The testimony of Papias will appear still more foreign to the debate, by quoting the passage of Eusebius, where it is mentioned: *τὸ μὲν οὖν κατὰ τὴν Ἱεράπολιν Φίλιππον τὸν ἀπόστολον ἄμα ταῖς θυγατράσι διατρίψαι, διὰ τῶν πρόσθεν δεδήλωται. ὡς δὲ κατὰ τοὺς αὐτοὺς ὁ Παπίας γενόμενος διήγησιν παρειληφέναι θαυμασίαν ὑπὸ τῶν τοῦ Φιλίππου θυγατέρων μνημονεύει, τὰ νῦν σημειωτέον. νεκροῦ γὰρ ἀνάστασιν κατ’ αὐτὸν γεγονῖαν ἴστορεῖ—καὶ ἄλλα δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς συγγραφεὺς ὡς ἐκ παραδόσεως ἀγράφου εἰς αὐτὸν ἤκουτα παρατέθειται.* (Euseb. lib. iii. c. 39.) “That Philip the apostle and his daughters lived at Hierapolis hath been mentioned already. But I should notice that Papias, who was their contemporary, mentions a wonderful story, as related to him by the daughters of Philip; for he tells us of one’s being raised from the dead at that time; and the same author has related other things also, as being handed down to him by unwritten tradition.” It is obvious, then, from this passage of Eusebius, of which I think I have given a faithful translation, that Papias does not mention this instance of a person’s being raised from the dead on his own knowledge, but as a fact, the tradition of which had been handed down to him by the daughters of Philip, whom he was personally acquainted with, as they lived at Hierapolis, of which he was bishop. Now these daughters of Philip are mentioned in the twenty-first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. We may well suppose, then, that they were eyewitnesses of miracles performed by their father and the other apostles; and consequently, the instance related by them to Papias, of one being raised from the dead, must be allowed to be a miracle of the apostolic age, and foreign to the present debate. But if the testimony of Papias be foreign, what shall we say to that of Irenæus? Dr. Middleton represents this father as telling us that the dead were frequently raised in his time, that is, in the second century, and lived for many years after; and this testimony the Doctor thinks

Christians in their times, but the cures of diseases, particularly the cures of demoniacs, by exorcising

he has sufficiently invalidated, by giving us instances of credulity, &c. in the character of Irenæus, and by shewing, from his contemporary, Theophilus of Antioch, that the Christians of that time were not able to produce to their pagan adversaries any one person who had been raised from the dead.

Now, in my judgment, the Doctor might have well avoided the invidious task of depreciating Irenæus's testimony. For though both he and the gentlemen who have answered the Free Inquiry, have taken it for granted, that Irenæus speaks of the power of raising the dead as subsisting still in his own time; this point, about which both are agreed, will not appear so evident, if we examine the passage in which Irenæus is supposed to give this testimony. As our copies of Irenæus want the original Greek here, I shall give it as preserved by Eusebius, lib. v. c. 7. p. 127.—*τοσοῦτον δὲ ἀποδέουσι τοῦ νεκρὸν ἐγεῖραι, καθὼς ὁ κύριος ἤγειρε καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι διὰ προσευχῆς, καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀδελφότητι πολλοὶ πολλάκις διὰ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον, καὶ τῆς κατὰ τόπον ἐκκλησίας πάσης αἰτησαμένης, μετὰ νηστείας καὶ λιτανείας πολλῆς, ἐπέστρεψε τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ τετελευτήκοτος, καὶ ἔχαρισθη ὁ ἀνθρωπος ταῖς εὐχαῖς τῶν ἀγίων.* “ They indeed “ (the heretics) are far from being able to raise the dead, as our “ Lord raised them, and as the apostles by their prayers; and “ frequently, amongst the brethren, by the prayers of the whole “ church of the place, offered up on some necessary occasion, “ with much fasting, has the spirit returned to the dead body, “ and the man been given back to the prayers of the saints.” The drift of Irenæus's argument is to confute an opinion of some heretics, who affirmed that Jesus did not truly rise from the dead, but only *φαντασιωδῶς*, in appearance, an opinion founded on the supposed impossibility of a resurrection, and which Irenæus shews to be groundless, by appealing to facts, to instances of persons who had been raised from the dead, by Jesus himself, by the apostles, by other brethren, and by the united prayers of some churches. But I appeal to any one whether he has given the least hint that any such miracle was frequently performed in his own days. He asserts that such miracles had happened in the church, but says not a word of their continuing still to happen; and therefore he may well be supposed to allude to

them ; which last indeed seems to be their favourite standing miracle, and the only one which I find (after

what had happened in the apostolic age, when all Christians are agreed that miraculous powers still subsisted.

But let us attend to what follows next, as quoted from Irenæus by Eusebius, in the same place, and we shall see farther grounds for concluding, that raising the dead is not one of the miraculous powers said by him to be exercised by Christians in his time : *ἐν τῷ ἐκείνου ὀνόματι οἱ ἀληθῶς αὐτοῦ μαθηταὶ, παρ' αὐτοῦ λαβόντες τὴν χάριν, ἐπιτελοῦσιν, ἐπ' εὐεργεσίᾳ τῇ τῶν λοιπῶν ἀνθρώπων —οἱ μὲν γὰρ δαίμονας ἐλαύνονται—οἱ δὲ πρόγνωσιν ἔχοντι τῶν μελλόντων, καὶ ὀπτασίας, καὶ ῥήσεις προφητικάς. ἄλλοι δὲ τοὺς κάμνοντας διὰ τῆς τῶν χειρῶν ἐπιθέσεως ἰῶνται.—* ἦδη δὲ καθὼς ἔφαμεν, καὶ νεκροὶ ἡγέρθησαν, καὶ παρέμειναν σὺν ἡμῖν ἰκανοῖς ἔτεσι. “ They who are his “ (Jesus’s) true disciples, do in his name confer blessings on “ others by a power received from him—for some cast out de- “ mons, others have knowledge of futurity, and see visions, “ others again cure the sick by imposition of hands. Besides, I “ have observed already the dead have been raised and have “ lived many years amongst us.” From this passage, then, thus closely translated, observe, that when Irenæus speaks of the casting out demons, of the cures of diseases, and of the visions and other personal gifts of Christians, his expressions denote actions of the present time, *δαίμονας ἐλαύνονται—κάμνοντας ἰῶνται, ὀπτασίας ἔχοντι*. These then were the miraculous powers which he says still subsisted. But when he speaks of raising the dead, he immediately changes his style, and says, *νεκροὶ ἡγέρθησαν*, have been raised, not *ἐγειρόνται*, which he would have used had he mentioned this power as still subsisting. If we turn to the Latin translation preserved in our copies of Irenæus, the same difference of expression may be observed there : “ *Alii enim dæ-“ mones excludunt, alii autem præscientiam habent futurorum, “ et visiones—alii autem laborantes aliqua infirmitate curant “ et sanos restituunt. Jam etiam, quemadmodum diximus, et “ mortui resurrexerunt et perseveraverunt nobiscum annis mul-“ tis.*” Iren. lib. ii. c. 57. p. 218. From all this, then, I think it is pretty evident that the miracle of raising the dead is spoken of by Irenæus, only as what had been performed formerly, not as what continued in his time, equally with the other instances,

having turned over their writings carefully, and with a view to this point) they challenged their adversaries to come and see them perform¹.

which, according to him, were still subsisting in the church. Dr. Middleton, in his Posthumous Piece, p. 69, justly corrects Dr. Dodwell for giving a present sense to *ἡγερθέντα*. But unless he himself runs into the like mistake, Irenæus's saying *νεκροὶ ἡγέρθησαν* cannot prove that he speaks of the dead being still raised by Christians in his own age.

¹ It may not be foreign to my argument to place before the reader some few of the many appeals made by the Christian writers of those age to the standing power of casting out demons, by exorcising them in the name of Jesus. The first I shall mention is from Justin Martyr. *Καὶ νῦν ἐκ τῶν ὑπὸ ὄψιν γινομένων μαθεῖν δύνασθε, δαιμονιολήπτους γὰρ πολλοὺς κατὰ πάντα τὸν κόσμον, καὶ ἐν τῇ ὑμέτερᾳ πόλει, πολλοὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων ἀνθρώπων τῶν Χριστίανῶν, ἐπορκίζοντες κατὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ σταυρωθέντος ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου, ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλων πάντων ἐπορκιστῶν καὶ ἐπαστῶν καὶ φαρμακευτῶν μὴ ἰαθέντας, ἰάσαντο, καὶ ἔτι νῦν ἰῶνται, καταργοῦντες καὶ ἐκδιώκοντες τοὺς κατέχοντας τοὺς ἀνθρώπους δαιμονας.* Justin Martyr, *Apol.* II. 6. Two passages to the same purpose occur in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, c. 85, 121. Tertullian boasts in the following manner: “*Edatur hic quis sub tribunalibus vestris, quem dæmone agi constet: Jussus a quolibet Christiano loqui spiritus ille, tam se dæmonem confitebitur de vero, quam alibi deum de falso: Æque producatur quis ex iis qui de Deo pati existimantur, qui aris inhalantes numen de nidore concipiunt, qui ructando curantur, qui anhelando profantur. Ista ipsa virgo cœlestis pluviarum pollicitatrix, iste ipse Æsculapius medicinarum demonstrator, alias de morituris Socordio et Tha- natio et Asclepiodoto vitæ subministrator, nisi se dæmones confessi fuerint, Christiano mentiri non audentes, ibidem illius Christiani procacissimi sanguinem fundite. Quid isto opere manifestius? quid hac probatione fidelius? Simplicitas veritatis in medio est; virtus illi sua assistit; nihil suspicari licebit magia aut aliqua ejusmodi fallacia fieri. Dictis non stetis, si oculi vestri et aures permiserint vobis.*” *Tertull. Apol.* c. 23. See also a similar passage of the same author, *Ad Scapulam*, c. 2, p. 6. St. Cyprian appeals to Demetrianus the pro-

Now, not to mention that the same fathers, who ascribe such powers to Christians, allow equally that

consul of Africa with like confidence : “ O si audire eos velles
 “ et videre, quando a nobis adjurantur et torquentur spiritibus
 “ flagris, et verborum tormentis de obsessis corporibus ejiciuntur,
 “ quando ejulantes et gementes voce humana, et potestate
 “ divina flagella et verbera sentientes, venturum judicium continentur,
 “ veni et cognosce vera esse quæ dicimus.” *Cyp. ad Demet.* §. 12. Minucius Felix triumphs to the same purpose :
 “ Hæc omnia sciunt plerique, pars vestrum, ipsos dæmonas de semetipsis confiteri, quoties a nobis tormentis verborum et orationis incendiis de corporibus exiguntur. Ipse Saturnus et Serapis et Jupiter et quicquid dæmonum colitis, victi dolore, quod sunt eloquuntur ; nec utique in turpitudinem sui, non nullis præsertim vestrum assistantibus, mentiuntur. Ipsi testibus eos esse dæmonas, de se verum confitentibus credite ; adjurati enim per Deum verum et solum, inviti, miseri, corporibus inhorrescunt, et, vel exiliunt statim, vel evanescunt gradatim, prout fides patientis adjuvat, aut gratia curantis asperiat.” *M. Felix*, p. 30. Julius Firmicus agrees in the same description : “ Ecce dæmon est quem colis ; cum Dei et Christi ejus nomen audierit, contremiscit, et, ut interrogantibus nobis respondeat trepidantia verba, vix se colligit ; adhærens homini laceratur, uritur, vapulat, et statim de commissis scleribus confitetur.” *De Error Profan. Relig.* Lactantius gives us the same account of the behaviour of the demons which were dispossessed in his time : “ Quo audito, tremunt, exclamant, et urunt se verberarique testantur ; et interroganti qui sint, quando venerint, quando in hominem irrepserint, confitentur. Sic extorti, et excruciat virtute divini numinis exsolantur ; propter hæc verbera et minas, sanctos et justos viros semper oderunt.” *Lact. de Justitia*, lib. v. c. 22.

But of all the works of the fathers of the second and third age, Origen's Defence of Christianity against Celsus, both on account of the length of the performance, and of the nature of the argument there treated, is the most likely to give us a complete view of the nature of the miraculous powers claimed by Christians at that period. It will not be unnecessary, therefore, to quote here the principal passages of that work, where any mention is made

they were exercised by pagans, with the assistance

of such powers. Origen tells us (lib. ii. c. 8.) that ever since the coming of Jesus there were no prophets nor miracles to be found among the Jews, whereas there were some footsteps of them still amongst Christians, which he had seen himself. "Εστιν οὖν ἴδειν μετὰ τὴν Ἰησοῦ ἐπιδημίαν, Ἰουδαίους καταλελειμένους—καὶ μηδὲν σημεῖον τοῦ εἶναι τινα θειότητα παρ' αὐτοῖς. οὐκ ἔτι γὰρ προφῆται, οὐδὲ τεράστια. ὃν κὰν ἵχνη ἐπὶ ποσὸν παρὰ Χριστιανοῖς εὑρίσκεται, καὶ τινά γε μείζονα, καὶ εἰ πιστοί ἐσμεν λέγοντες, ἐωράκαμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς. What then are the particular instances brought by Origen in support of this general assertion? The following are all that I have been able to meet with. He mentions (ib. c. 33.) that in his time cures were performed in the name of Jesus: Γενναῖον δ' ἔργον τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, τὸ μέχρι σήμερον θεραπεύεσθαι τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ, οὐς δὲ Θεὸς βούλεται. He affirms (lib. iii. c. 24.) that some Christians were able, by invoking the name of God and Jesus, to cure the sick; and that he himself had seen many freed in this manner from the severest diseases, such as madness, and the like: τινὲς δὲ σημεῖα τοῦ εἰληφέναι τι διὰ τὴν πίστιν ταύτην παραδοξότερον, ἐπιδείκνυνται ἐν οἷς θεραπεύουσιν. οὐδὲν ἄλλο καλοῦντες ἐπὶ τοὺς δεομένους θεραπείας, ἢ τὸν ἐπὶ πᾶσι Θεὸν, καὶ τὸ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ὅνομα μετὰ τῆς περὶ αὐτοῦ ἱστορίας. τούτοις γὰρ καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐωράκαμεν πολλοὺς ἀπαλλαγέντας χαλεπῶν συμπτωμάτων, καὶ ἐκστάσεων, καὶ μανιῶν, καὶ ἄλλων μυρίων, ἀπερ οὕτ' ἄνθρωποι οὕτε δαίμονες ἐθεράπευσαν. He tells us (ib. c. 36.) that the demons quitted the bodies they possessed, whenever adjured by the name of Jesus: δαίμονες τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ ἀπαγγελλομένῳ μόνον εἴκοντες ἀνεχώρουν ἀπὸ τῶν ὑπ' αὐτῶν πολεμούμενων. In another place (lib. vii. c. 4.) he says, that many Christians could cast out demons from the possessed, without any magical incantations, but merely by exorcising them with prayers; that even the most simple men could do this; and that this power was generally exercised by laymen: ὅποιόν ἐστι καὶ τὸ τῶν δαίμονων γένος, οὐς οὐκ ὀλίγοι Χριστιανῶν ἀπελαύνουσι τῶν πασχόντων σὺν οὐδενὶ περιέργῳ καὶ μαγικῷ ἢ φαρμακευτικῷ πράγματι, ἀλλὰ μόνη εὐχῇ—καὶ ὅσα ἀν δύναιτο προσάγειν ἀπλούστερος ἄνθρωπος, ὡς ἐπίπαν γὰρ ἴδιωται τὸ τοιοῦτον πράττουσι.—These, then, being the single instances produced by Origen to corroborate his general assertion, as to the continuance of miraculous powers in his time, this perfectly agrees with the representation which I have given of them, viz. that they

of their demons or gods^m, and admit that there were exorcists among the Jews and Gentiles, who by the use of certain forms of words, used as charms, and by the practice of certain rites, cast out devils as well as the Christian exorcistsⁿ; not to mention this, I say, which some may think puts these feats consisted in the cures of diseases, and particularly in the cures of persons supposed to be possessed by some demon.

^m Origen, in his Treatise, which I have quoted so often, seems to allow (for argument's sake at least) the power of curing diseases to *Æsculapius*, a demon skilled in physic; and of prophesying, to another demon, Apollo: *Ἴνα δὲ καὶ δῶ Ἱατρὸν τινα Δαίμονα θεραπείειν σώματα, τὸν καλούμενον Ἀσκληπίον εἴποιμ' ἀν πρὸς τοὺς θαυμάζοντας τὸ τοιοῦτο, ἡ τὴν Ἀπόλλωνος μαντείαν, &c. &c. lib. iii. c. 25.* But if Origen does not come up to the point, Athenagoras, a father of the same age, certainly does; for he mentions it as a matter about which Christians were agreed, that in different places, cities, and countries, there were some extraordinary works performed in the name of idols: *Τὸ μὲν δὴ κατὰ τόπους, καὶ πόλεις, καὶ ἔθνη γίγνεσθαι τινας ἐπ' ὄνόματι εἰδώλων ἐνεργείας οὐδ' ἡμεῖς ἀντιλέγομεν· οὐ μὴν εἰ ὠφελήθησάν τινες, καὶ αὖ ἐλυπήθησαν ἔτεροι, θεοὺς νομιοῦμεν τοὺς ἐφ' ἔκάτερα ἐνεργήσαντας.* Athenag. Legatio pro Christ. p. 25. Oxonii, 1706, p. 90. [c. 23. ed. 1742.]

I shall only add, that it seems to appear unexceptionably, from the passages quoted in this and in the former note, that the Christian writers of the second and third ages did not deny the existence of the Jupiter, the Saturn, the Serapis, the Apollo, the Iris, the *Æsculapius*, and other objects of the Pagan worship, but only laboured to prove that they were not gods, but demons. In support of which they urged the confession of these demons themselves, whom they supposed to possess men's bodies, and over whom the Christian exorcists had so commanding an influence.

ⁿ This appears indubitably from the following authorities: Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho, p. 311. [c. 121.] Ireneus, lib. ii. c. 5. p. 123; and Origen against Celsus, p. 17, 183, 184, 262; which passages I avoid transcribing for the sake of brevity.

of jugglers and impostors upon the same footing of credibility with the works ascribed to Christians, may it not be alleged, that the objections urged in the above Treatise against such instances of a miraculous power in later ages are applicable also to these? Or, admitting that the objections do not apply, may it not be alleged, that the cures ascribed to the prayers of Christians, to the imposition of their hands, &c. in those early times, might, for aught we know, be really brought about in a natural way, and be accounted for in the same way in which we have accounted for those ascribed to the abbé Paris, and those attributed by the superstitious papists to the intercession of their saints? And particularly since these primitive cures are, as Dr. Church allows, related to us without any circumstance attending them, how know we whether the grounds for ascribing them to a supernatural interposition were such as would bear examination, if we had the means of examination in our power? With regard to the exorcising of devils, the only miracle which the Christian apologists challenge the pagans to come and see them perform, will it not be obvious to ask, why, if this power was continued in the church, as a proof of the truth of Christianity, powers also were not appealed to, less ambiguous in their nature, and other works performed, which admit of no solution from natural causes, and were incapable of being the effects of fraud and collusion ^o?

^o Gregory, usually surnamed Thaumaturgus, flourished about the middle of the third century, and many of the miracles ascribed to him are facts which can admit of no solution from natural causes. Will not this then prove that I have given a par-

If any one, after weighing these objections, should still think the accounts of the miracles, mentioned by the fathers of the second and third age, to be sufficiently satisfactory, and worthy of belief, let him enjoy his opinion; but, however, let him not blame those who are more scrupulous in admitting a claim to miracles, and who, while they have the miracles recorded in the Gospels confirmed to them by so full, so clear, so commanding an evidence, think themselves at liberty to doubt of, nay to disbelieve, the miracles reported by the fathers on evidence far less satisfactory.

Thus much with regard to the miraculous powers of the second and third centuries. But if there should be room for allowing (and I am far from denying this) that these ought in justice to be distinguished from the more modern and more suspicious pretensions of popery, surely this favourable opinion cannot be extended, by any one who has examined the subject, to the claims of the fourth and fifth cen-

tial view of the miraculous powers of the second and third ages? I think not; and for this reason. Though Gregory flourished in the third century, no contemporary author mentions any thing of the strange wonders which he is reported to have wrought; nor can they be traced higher than the time of St. Basil and St. Gregory of Nyssa, who were brothers, and both lived about a century after his death. They, therefore, are justly rejected as inventions of a later age, and can be believed by those only who can admit the miracles ascribed to Apollonius, or those reported so long after his death, of Ignatius. Gregory of Nyssa, according to Dr. Cave's character of him, (Hist. Liter. p. 132,) was apt to be too credulous. No wonder, therefore, he gave too much credit to old women's tales, as the anecdotes of the Wonder-worker must be allowed to be, when related (as we learn from St. Basil, Epist. ad Neocæsar. 75. p. 131. t. i.) by his aged grandmother Macrina.

turies. For though the wonders ascribed to the heroes of those times be related in the most circumstantial manner, and in general must, if they were true, be allowed to be supernatural, so that the defects observable in the accounts of the two former ages are not applicable to them ; yet do they so exactly resemble the boasted wonders of the Romish saints, that a protestant who goes so low, will never be able to give a satisfactory reason why he will go no lower ; why, while he admits the miracles of those frantic enthusiasts of the fourth or fifth centuries, of a Paul, an Anthony, an Hilarion, a Simeon Stylites, he is not equally an advocate for the miracles of the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries, for St. Nicholas Tolentine and his chickens, and for another Anthony preaching to his fishes.

There seems less reason for my using of caution in giving my opinion as to the miracles of the fourth and fifth ages, both because Dr. Church and Dr. Dodwell, by confining their defence of the primitive miracles to those of the three first ages, seem to give them up, which is also done by Mr. Jackson and Mr. Brooke, in their answers to the Free Inquiry, and because even Mr. Dodwell, the father, who has deduced the history of the primitive miracles to the establishment of Christianity by human laws, shuts them up then ; declaring that many things concurred to recommend the credit of the preceding ages, which have no place in those that followed ; and who, speaking of the Life of Gregory, called the Wonder-worker, written by Gregory of Nyssa, a bishop of the greatest piety and gravity, says, “ in “ this Life there are many things which breathe the “ air of imposture, and the genius of the fourth cen-

“ tury, so that I dare not mix them with what is
“ more genuine, for fear of hurting the credit of
“ all^p.”

I shall only add, that if ever there were any accounts of miracles, which passed current without being examined into at the first publication, and which consequently will not bear the test of the third rule which I laid down in this Treatise, this may be affirmed of the miracles recorded by writers of the fourth and fifth ages, when Christianity, now freed from the terrors of persecution, and aided by the civil magistrate, began to be corrupted by its credulous or ill-designing professors, and the foundation was laid of those inventions, which have gathered like a snowball, in every succeeding age of superstitious ignorance, till at last the sunshine of the reformation began to melt the monstrous heap. And if we think ourselves warranted to pay no regard to the accounts of more modern miracles, propagated in favour of image-worship, purgatory, and transubstantiation, the very same reasons will lead us, if we be consistent with ourselves, to rank in the same class the miracles of the fourth and fifth age, propagated in favour of monkery, and of the worship of saints and relicks.

Though it may be a matter more of curiosity than of use, to endeavour to determine the exact time when miraculous powers were withdrawn from the church, yet I think that it may be determined with some degree of exactness. The various opinions of learned protestants, who have extended them at all after the apostles, shew how much they have

^p See Mr. Dodwell's Diss. Iren. as quoted by Dr. Middleton, Free Inquiry, p. 128, 129.

been at a loss with regard to this, which has been urged by papists with an air of triumph, as if protestants not being able to agree when the age of miracles was closed, this were an argument of its not being closed as yet. If there be any thing in this objection, (though perhaps there is not,) I think I have it in my power to obviate it, by fixing upon a period, beyond which we may be certain that miraculous powers did not subsist.

In order, then, to this, I must desire you to recollect that I have endeavoured, under my last head in the above Treatise, to shew, that what we know of the attributes of the Deity, and of the usual methods of his government, incline us to believe that miracles will never be performed by the agency and instrumentality of men, but when these men are set apart and chosen by God to be his ambassadors, as it were, to the world, to deliver some message, or to preach some doctrine, as a law from heaven ; and in this case, their being vested with a power of working miracles is the best credential of the divinity of their mission.

If we set out with this as a principle, then shall we easily determine when it was that miracles ceased to be performed by Christians ; for we shall be led to conclude that the age of Christian miracles must have ceased with the age of Christian inspiration. So long as Heaven thought proper to set apart any particular set of men to be the authorized preachers of the new religion revealed to mankind, so long, may we rest satisfied, miraculous powers were continued. But whenever this purpose was answered, and inspiration ceased to be any longer necessary, by the complete publication of the gospel,

then would the miraculous powers, whose end was to prove the truth of inspiration, be of course withdrawn.

I will not take upon me to say that we can trace with any certainty the exact year when Christianity ceased to be preached by persons really inspired. St. John, we know, who survived the rest of the twelve apostles, died very near^q the close of the first age. However, this we know likewise, from perusing our New Testament, that the twelve were not the only inspired preachers of Christianity; but that, besides them, many other disciples were vested with the same character, and for this purpose enabled to perform such works as might prove that God was with them. And it is far from being improbable, that some of them did survive the last of the apostles, and, consequently, that miraculous powers were not totally withdrawn at the beginning of the second century.

But if they were continued thus long, there is all the reason in the world to conclude that they did entirely cease soon after. This at least is certain, that none of the venerable fathers, the ornaments and heads of the church in the second or third age, whose works have come down to us, or whose names only are preserved, ever pretended to put themselves upon a footing with the inspired publishers of the gospel, or assumed the character of teachers from heaven. The gospel revelation was closed with the apostles and with the apostolical assistants; and antiquity is unanimous in assuring us of this fact, that in the very age immediately connected with that of the apostles, their works were distinguished

^q In the year 99.

from other writings of Christians, and universally esteemed as the oracles of truth, as the standard of Christian faith and practice. A most convincing proof that no future inspiration was claimed, or, if claimed, was allowed.

From what has been offered then under this head, we may easily infer, that Dr. Middleton might have denied that miraculous powers were continued in the church after the apostolical age, and yet have done no disservice to Christianity, nor have furnished us with any grounds for calling his faith as a Christian in question. And if his Free Inquiry has had both these consequences, this has arisen from his manner of supporting his opinion, not from the real tendency of the opinion itself. He has justly provoked the indignation of every serious Christian, by the indecent contempt with which he treats the earliest fathers of the church, whose names have been venerable in every age, and whose labours in defence of Christianity, for the truth of which most of them laid down their lives, ought to have secured them from insult, if they could not procure his esteem. And if there be any superstitious conceits or weak prejudices to be met with in their works, a veil ought to have been thrown over them, as these are faults not of their own, but of the times in which they lived ; and which, if they disgrace the pages of the fathers of the Christian church, detract equally from the merit of their contemporaries, the philosophers of the Platonic and Pythagorean schools.

But this is only a secondary reason for the offence taken by Christians at the Free Inquiry of Dr. Middleton. Charity forbids us to put the worst construction on the intentions of any one living, but it

would be more ungenerous to treat thus one who is now no more. And yet, I think that Dr. Middleton, if he meant to reject only the miracles since the apostolical age, while he admitted those of Jesus, which every Christian must admit, took the most obvious steps to create a suspicion that his book was levelled equally at both. One thing is certain, that the deists have been furnished with weapons against Christianity from his magazine. For while he labours so strenuously to overturn the credibility of all miraculous powers since the apostles, he leaves his readers to draw their consequences, nay, encourages them to extend his arguments as they please. And many, it is notorious, have extended them to those miracles recorded by St. Matthew or St. Luke, while those mentioned by Irenæus or Justin Martyr are the only ones expressly aimed at. Dr. Middleton, we will suppose, was not aware of this, when his Inquiry was first published. But after he was aware of it, after he had seen that the manner in which he treated his argument, not the argument itself, had done so much harm to the religion he professed, it then became his duty, it was expected, it was necessary, in order to his convincing the world that he had no other design besides that which he avowed, that he should give the antidote as he had administered the poison; by pointing out the superiority of the evidence by which the miracles recorded in the New Testament are supported, and by shewing that the reasons assigned for rejecting the miracles of the fathers are not applicable (as I have proved they are not) to the miracles of the Evangelists.

Had he done this, far from looking upon him as a

betrayer of his cause, I should rather have compared him to a wise and prudent general, who abandons outworks, the maintaining of which would lay him open to the insults of the enemy, and retires behind bastions, against which all their attacks will be ineffectual. In a word, had Dr. Middleton done this, he would have done real service to the cause of Christianity, by removing a fund of cavilling, and a source of objections, which have been furnished to the scoffer, by some injudicious defenders of the Christian religion, who have blended its evidences with connexions, equally suspicious as they are foreign, and by aiming to prove more than was necessary, have brought into doubt what otherwise would have been thought sufficiently proved.

But as this was not attempted by Dr. Middleton, (and it were to be wished that we could discover, in his subsequent writings, that he had any inclination to attempt it^r,) the learned and worthy persons who

^r His treatise on Prophecy: a work where we have more of invective than of argument, and which will be a lasting proof that no dignity of character, or superiority of abilities, can secure one from the attacks of envious spleen and disappointed ambition; and his posthumous Vindication of the Free Inquiry, in which from p. 5 to p. 11 he seems rather to strengthen than to confute the charge which had been brought against him, of having dropt hints of his allowing of no revelation besides that “ which “ God has made of himself from the beginning, and placed con- “ tinually before our eyes, in the wonderful works and beautiful “ fabric of this visible world.” *Pref. to Free Inquiry*, p. 18.

And yet, after all, as I should be very sorry to give up to the enemies of Christianity a writer of Dr. Middleton’s abilities, (not to mention any thing of his profession,) it is with a degree of pleasure that I meet with the following declaration of his sentiments, in his introductory discourse. “ As far as miracles can “ evince the divinity of a religion, the pretensions of Christianity

undertook to confute the Free Inquiry should have made this the principal view of their answers. In-

“ are confirmed by the evidence of such, as of all others on record are the least liable to exception, and carry the clearest marks of their sincerity; being wrought by Christ and his apostles, for an end so great, so important, and so universally beneficial, as to be highly worthy of the interposition of the Deity; and wrought by the ministry of mean and simple men, in the open view of the people, as the testimonial of that divine mission to which they pretended, and delivered to us by eyewitnesses, whose honest characters exclude the suspicion of fraud, and whose knowledge of the facts which they relate scarce admits the probability of a mistake. This is the genuine ground on which Christianity rests.” p. 94. Dr. Middleton expresses himself still more strongly in the prefatory discourse to his Letter from Rome. “ That my sentiments, therefore,” says he, “ on this head, may neither be mistaken nor suspected, and that I may give satisfaction, as far as I am able, to all whom, by any freedom of expression, I may possibly have offended, either in this, or in any other of my writings, I take this occasion to declare, that I look upon miracles, when accompanied with all the circumstances proper to persuade us of the reality of the facts said to be performed, and of the dignity of the end for which they were performed, to be the most decisive proofs that can be given of the truth and divinity of any religion. This was evidently the case of the Jewish and of the Christian miracles, wrought in such a manner as could leave no doubt upon the senses of those who were the witnesses of them, and for the noblest end for which the Deity can be conceived to interpose himself, the universal good and salvation of man.” And again. “ The innumerable forgeries of this sort, which have been imposed upon mankind in all ages, are so far from weakening the credibility of the Jewish and Christian miracles, that they strengthen it. For how could we account for a practice so universal, of forging miracles for the support of false religions, if on some occasions they had not actually been wrought for the con-

stead of making the cause of the fathers, as it were, the cause of Christianity, (which was the very thing the enemies of Christianity could wish,) their answers would have done more effectual service to their religion, had they begun where Middleton ended, had they supplied what he omitted ; in short, had they joined issue with him, as to the miracles which he rejected, and which they themselves look upon as of no consequence to the cause of the gospel, and shewn that this would not affect the credibility of those mi-

“ firmation of a true one ? Or how is it possible that so many “ spurious copies should pass upon the world, without some “ genuine original, from whence they were drawn ; whose known “ existence and tried success might give an appearance of pro- “ bability to the counterfeit ? ” p. 84, 87. Whether Dr. Mid-
dleton has not in many of his works, from the famous letter to Dr. Waterland, down to the posthumous Vindication of his Free Inquiry, dropt hints, nay even defended arguments, which can-
not well be reconciled with the above declaration of his senti-
ments, may perhaps admit of a debate. However, as every one would insist upon it as a matter of mere justice, that his clear and positive declarations should be the rule of determining the real meaning and tendency of his more ambiguous expressions ; for this reason, I think that Dr. Middleton cannot be claimed by writers on the side of infidelity, and that we have not sufficient grounds, notwithstanding the many suspicious circumstances in his works, to represent him as a disbeliever of the miracles on which Christianity is built. The liberty I have taken, I think justly, in several places of this Treatise, to pass censures on Dr. Middleton, must satisfy every one, that nothing but a regard to truth could have drawn from me the attempt in the present note, to clear his character from an imputation, which however cannot be called a malicious one, as he has written with a free-
dom of expression in some of his works, according to his own confession, which left room to his antagonists to mistake or suspect his real sentiments.

racles, on the truth of which the gospel undoubtedly is founded.

Had this been done, your cavils as to the want of a criterion to distinguish true from false miracles would have been obviated, and this task, which I have now performed, been, in a great measure, unnecessary. A task, I own, which I should never have undertaken, had not the importance of the subject made me forget my inability to do it justice, and the silence of others, better able to defend Christianity, secured this weak attempt of mine from a charge of presumption. And if, after all that I have offered, you still continue unconvinced, you must impute to the unskilfulness of the champion what certainly ought not to be imputed to the weakness of his cause. My weapons were good, if I could have used them effectually.

But though I may have failed in my attempt to convince you, my labour has at least been crowned with this happy effect; it has strengthened my own faith. For by being obliged to consider, with more attention than perhaps I had done before, the nature of your objections, their insufficiency has appeared in a stronger light. And the closest scrutiny and most impartial examination of the evidences which support those miracles on the credibility of which the truth of the revelation in the New Testament is built, have served only to satisfy me that Christianity is founded upon a rock, and that every attempt to sap its foundations tends to discover their strength the more. This conviction, a conviction not the effect of blind prejudice, but the result of honest inquiry, has filled my mind with a satisfaction,

that can be felt by those alone who are sincere believers of a religion, which every one would wish to be true, who would wish to attain to that glorious immortality which it has brought to light and promised to mankind.

I am, &c.



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